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Encounter

November 1981

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in a long conversation with

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Story

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The English Idea of a Gentleman

Edited by Melvin J. Lasky & Anthony Thwaite

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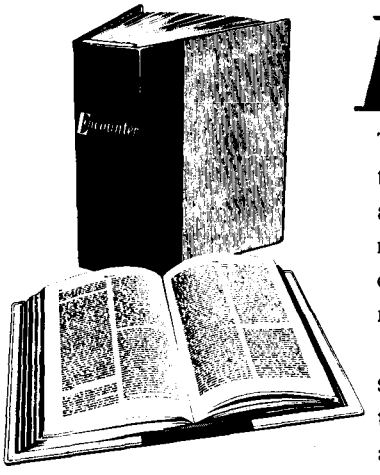

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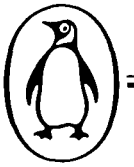

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Douglas Dunn

Wives in the Garden

EVERY YEAR, in the same week of August, we visit our old friends Malcolm and Henrietta Blair at their summer house in Kintyre. We off-load our children on their grandparents and the Blairs do the same.

Within half-an-hour of arriving at the house, Malcolm and I invariably find ourselves looking at the ocean. It is, he claims, the best view of the sea you can find, whether from the west coast of Europe or the east coast of America. He is very proprietorial about his view of the Atlantic.

From where we stand on rough, salty grass, the house is about two hundred yards behind us. Turning round, we might catch sight of Laura and Henrietta, watching us from a bedroom window. They have conversations of their own, as they unpack our suitcases.

"I can stand here", I said, "look out there, and I find it hard to believe I'm actually in Europe. It's a feeling of precariousness, Malcolm. I feel I'm at the extreme edge of a continent."

"You haven't changed, have you?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Because", he said, "you sang a similarly sentimental aria last year."

Malcolm has a condescendingly elegant smile. He is a university lecturer. An amiably long-suffering expression in the face of untenable points of view is a trick his profession has perfected over centuries. "But give or take a Hebrides or two, or a few rocks, it is the edge of Europe. Still the same old Steve", he said, contriving to make me feel how tall he is. "Still unrealistic and pushing forty."

"You said that last year, too."

"Did I?" he said, casually pointing to cormorants, those black birds which fly towards the sea like caricatures of thirst. "I dare say I'll say it again next year."

In spite of the two unused cups which we saw were waiting for us on the coffee table, Malcolm went straight to the half-empty shelf among his bookstacks where he keeps his whisky. He poured two glasses, one of which he gave me.

"Other people's libraries", I said, "always look much more impressive than mine."

"This is the only place where I can work." Bookshelves filled an entire wall. There were piles of books on the floor. On a desk, by the window, there were more books. Most of them were place-marked with strips of paper. Signs of academic industry were everywhere.

"We had to hire a van at the beginning of the summer", Henrietta said. "And I counted them. He shipped a hundred and ninety books. You'd think that was enough, wouldn't you?" She looked at Laura. "Oh no, he's on the phone to the university library at least once a day."

"Once", Malcolm corrected her. "Once, in seven weeks." Their eyes met. Their subdued anger made me come to Malcolm's assistance. I'd hardly opened my mouth when Henrietta interrupted.

"Go on then", she said. "You were ecstatic enough when you dug them out, and you said you were dying to show them to Steve. So go on then. Why don't you?"

"Show Steve what?" I knew their voices, their expressions, well enough to understand that Malcolm was trying to outwit Henrietta's seriously teasing tone with pretended innocence.

"You know what", she said.

"Does Laura speak in riddles?" he asked me, in his best superior manner. "Henrietta does."

"Malcolm!"

"When you ask her where something is, she

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says 'In there', without pointing. In where? 'Upstairs, in the drawer.' Do you know how many drawers we have, upstairs?"

"Malcolm!"

"Another drink? Girls?" he coaxed.

"Didn't you hear us laughing?" Laura said, looking at me, the one who knew nothing.

"I dug out", said Malcolm, hesitantly, as he poured, "some old school photographs. And I apparently shouldn't have done that." He continued pouring, his back still turned to us. "I remember you saying you'd lost yours."

"They're probably upstairs", I said, looking at Laura, "in a drawer."

"No they aren't", she said. Why are women so powerful? "They're in that box in the attic, beside your school blazer, your prefect's badge, your tie, your running vest, and your running shoes with the withered grass on the spikes." Why are women so accurate? They remember everything.

"Laura! That's rich! Oh, Steve, why? Why have you kept all that stuff?" Henrietta gloated.

"Why?"

"Come on, Malcolm!" Laura demanded. "Show him the photographs!"

"I will", said Malcolm, coolly, handing out drinks. "I will, later."

"Now!"

"Why now, for God's sake?"

"Because", said Henrietta, "we want to watch you looking at them."

"Well", I said, clapping my hands, an irritating habit of mine which Laura hates, "I think I'll go for a stroll."

"Sit down, you coward!" said Laura.

HENRIETTA REACHED OVER to the table beside her. Malcolm's photographs were sinisterly convenient. "Malcolm", she said. "Be a dear and pass these to Steve."

Malcolm had to cross the room to take the photographs from Henrietta. There was the hint of a snatch in how they came into his hands. Or was it a thrust from the other side? "Thank you, darling", she said, keeping one picture back, over which she and Laura began to titter.

"There's Fat Moffat", said Malcolm. He sounded disappointed, saddened that the sentimental pleasures of reminiscence had been ruined. "And Nimmo, Napier, Anderson."

"No", I said. "That's Nimmo, and that's Napier." An insolent grin, hovering over a shadowy pallor, stared out from the formal ranks of seventeen-year-old boys. Hair oil glowed on short hair.

"We can go over them later", Malcolm whispered. "There are faces I can't put names to. There are faces here I don't even remember."

"Steve!" said Laura, holding up a picture of the relay squad. One boy held the baton like a truncheon. All four runners looked happy, half-naked and breathless. "And that's you!" Henrietta laughed. She doubled up with mirth. A half-melted floe of ice slid from her tilted gin. "What lovely knees you had!"

"Pull up your trousers", said Henrietta through the spaces in her jocosity. "Go on, pull them up. I want to see your knees."

"You've seen my knees."

"Not for a whole year I haven't. Pull up your trousers."

One way to thwart this teasing, I thought, is to play them at their own game. I pulled my trousers up over the knees and walked round the room with as much flaunted theatricality as I could manage. "I may have put on weight", I said, "but you have to admit it, I've kept my legs. And my neck", I said, raising my chin, "I've kept my neck." Malcolm blinked with dismay.

"But your best feature", said Laura, "is your feet."

"Really?" said Henrietta. "Take off your shoes, Steve."

"I will not. I draw the line. What's caused this?"

"Yes", said Malcolm, unsure, I thought, if he should risk the question, "what's at the back of all this?"

"And can you", asked Henrietta, ignoring our questions, "still touch the ground with the palms of your hands? You were very proud of that."

Knowing my tactics had been soured by superior forces, I bent over as vigorously as I could. They knew I was stupid, but they would see that if nothing else I was still reasonably fit. With a groan that was more sincere than I'd intended, I touched the varnished floorboards with the butts of my hands. "Can you do that?" I said to Malcolm, blaming him for everything.

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"I wouldn't even try", he said, quickly pouring himself another drink.

A LONG TIME AGO, when touching the ground with the palms of my hands didn't rip the fat off the backs of my legs, we were waiting for Laura and Henrietta in a spaghetti restaurant. They arrived, studiously late, without apologies. They, too, were students.

Whatever values of the spirit the Beat Generation possessed were re-embodied in us as bare feet in sandals, itchy beards, stretched sweaters and a conspicuous lassitude. Laura and Henrietta imitated the fashions of the time. They wore black wool stockings, black polo-neck sweaters, skirts with wide belts and large buckles, anything, especially their hair, or their Gauloises, which made them look like Juliette Greco in downtown Glasgow. They were up-market in looking that particular part. There was nothing improvised or scruffy in their appearances, which made us look lucky, as if we did not deserve such nice girl friends. If they liked to carry copies of *Evergreen Review*, which we loaned them, it was not because they appreciated their contents. Neither did we, much, but we said we did. We entered into serious haggles for books of poetry published by the City Lights Bookshop—San Francisco! —which could be bought second-hand from strangers "passing through."

That afternoon Laura sat and sulked. She stared from one table to another like a distressed vamp. I was worried about her. "Why don't you eat?" I said, as she turned the plain pasta over with her spoon. "It's awful, but it's costing Malcolm all he's got left." She scratched her breasts with casual deliberation as she looked at people at other tables. Her sweater was a tight fit. From the visual point of view, what she did to it was of considerable fascination. "I don't think", I said, "you should do that."

"What of it?"

"That man there, he thinks you're making a pass at him."

"And what if I am?" Her look of contempt was so effective I thought she must have rehearsed it in front of a mirror.

"Please", I said, "don't do it."

Malcolm put the photographs away. I was sitting with my drink, my trousers still rolled up above the knees. "Poor Caroline", said Henrietta. "She's a mouse. She sits at home daring herself to have a second dry sherry. She hates that rugby crowd. Laurence knew it before he married her. She knew it. Honestly, I don't know why they bother."

"Remember?" I said to Laura, drawing her attention, and pausing until everyone was quiet. "That day, in the Continental, when I told you off for scratching your nipple?" There was a shock, a turbulence of raised eyebrows. Laura and Henrietta filled it in with laughter. They were laughing so much that day it was beginning to make me nervous. "I don't know why you're laughing", I said to Henrietta, trying to be firm. "*You* used to call yourself *Hank*." If anything, they laughed louder.

"What made you bring that up?" Laura asked.

"Nothing", I said, closing the subject. "It just entered my head. I just remembered it."

"For heaven's sake, will you roll your trousers down!"

"Up, down, make up your mind, woman! Off! Shall I take them off?"

"No", said Henrietta. "I wouldn't do that."

IN PARTS of the world where summer really is Summer, men must be more familiar with the agreeable sensation of seeing their wives walk out of the ocean than is possible in Kintyre. Few arrivals of the woman you love are as contenting as seeing her run towards you across the sand, having swum, splashed and waded in the sea.

Idle talk on the beach while our wives are in the water is an occasion of summer calm that has become an indispensable part of that indispensable week. Malcolm sits in his chair, wearing slacks, a formal shirt with one button open at the neck, shoes and socks. I lie on the sand in my swimming trunks.

"The sea's really a kind of garden. That's why women look so much better in it than men do. It's no coincidence we have mermaids, and naiads, or that Aphrodite was a woman."

"What about mermen?" I said. "Not to mention Neptune or Poseidon, or whatever you call him."

"Did you see Henrietta slap that wave?" he said. "It took her by surprise. My God, she

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slapped it, as if it'd been naughty. More plonk?"

"Later", I said. "I think I'll take the plunge."

"Be a merman, then." He always professes contempt when I decide to go in for a swim.

"It's freezing!" I shouted as I splashed around the shallows.

"No it isn't", said Henrietta.

"What?"

"You can't be cold", she said, "because I'm not."

"You've kept your neck, darling", said Laura. "But you're sadly deluded about your legs."

"My legs are as they always were."

"Your legs", said Henrietta, "are a disgrace, unlike", she said, "mine."

"We've decided", said Laura, the sea breaking across her belly, "that we've kept our looks so much more successfully than you or Malcolm. Haven't we?"

"Can't you persuade that slothful medievalist to come down to the water?" Henrietta asked.

"If you can't", I said, "then how can I?"

"Let's swim out a bit", said Laura. She and Henrietta swam out to the calm deeps, knowing, I think, that my feeble untutored strokes would not take me that far.

One late-afternoon, we noticed our wives had gone out into the garden. Both were wearing wide-brimmed white hats, those elegant shirts they make themselves from expensive material, and long skirts. Clearly, when they changed, they had no intention of gardening, but that was what they were doing. They knelt on a rug at the edge of a flower bed and they were weeding it, conversationally. A concession to the earth had been made in that they wore white canvas gardening gloves. Dropped leaves were sprinkled on the brim of Laura's hat. "They haven't changed much", I said, "have they? They were fashion-conscious when we first met them. Looking back, I think we've always been 'accessories.' " Why do we gloss over love like that, using a tone of voice which we don't mean? Wind blew a birch-leaf upright on the brim of Laura's hat. It stood there, balanced like a high-diver before it blew away.

"Yes", Malcolm said. "Lately I've felt myself as a sort of handbag, or walking-stick."

"Walking-stick?"

"An accessory."

"Does Henrietta carry a walking-stick?"

"You know what I mean", he said, crossly. "An accessory."

"*Walking-stick*?"

"Do you think", he said, "that if we put our best suits on, they might allow us to join them?"

We watched our wives through the open French windows as they plucked and picked at what few weeds were growing in the flower beds. They were talking, but too quietly for us to overhear. They worked slowly, the way our mothers do over their needlework and knitting when they meet on week-day afternoons in a rotation of houses, over their secret conversations.

"Actually", Malcolm said, "I remembered that day in the Continental, but I didn't want to say anything." He got up and stood discreetly behind the blowing curtains at the window. "I remember it very clearly. I remember what she said, too."

"Said what?"

" '*It itched*'." He laughed quietly. "I was impressed."

"She didn't say that. I don't remember her saying that."

"I'd come to the conclusion that women have a different kind of memory", he said, "But yours, yours is just faulty."

"Women", I said, "have a clearer sense of irony, but my memory", I emphasised, "is perfectly vivid as far as that day's concerned."

" 'It itched' ", he repeated, with a chuckle.

"She didn't say that."

LAURA SAT BACK on her heels and stretched her back. Henrietta copied her. We stepped back into the room, afraid of having been caught in the act of looking at our own wives. For some reason we had to keep it secret. It was the kind of embarrassing experience that makes you look at your watch.

"All week", I said, "I think they've been playing up on our bad faith. Thank God they haven't got round to remembering the phrase."

"Bad faith?" He laughed the laugh of the unjustifiably incredulous.

"We're too guilty of how we've changed", I said. "All we do is disguise our bad faith to ourselves."

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"Bad faith? *Mauvais foi*?"

"*Mauvaise*. Arrogantly enough, it's feminine."

"What", he asked, "became of Napier? It's *important*. What's Fat Moffat doing? How many kids has Nimmo and do we *know* who he married?"

"I don't care what happened to Napier. Come to think of it, I didn't like him then, and I've gone right off him now."

"All summer", he said, downing his drink, "I've been realising how I've spent years trying not to be middle-class average. But now", he said, "I want my destiny." He bent over his hugged glass. "I don't want to be different any longer."

"Malcolm, you were never *very* different. You're inventing yourself."

"Last week, I saw people playing tennis. They were our age. I never played tennis in my life and neither did you. But I watched them, wishing I knew how to play, and saying to myself, 'Wouldn't it be nice? Wouldn't it be nice to play like that, with Henrietta, and Laura, and Steve?' "

"You used to think these people who lived for the tennis club were despicable."

"When we should have been playing tennis with nice middle-class girls in short skirts, what were we doing? We were swanning around dives talking tripe about Jean-Paul Sartre in two languages. In your case, in three languages. What are you laughing at now?"

"I've just seen a vision. Of you, playing tennis. Eighty degrees in the shade, and Malcolm Blair serving. White slacks and sensible pullover. You *never* wear shorts!"

I stood at the French doors again. For all of five minutes I was on my own, watching our wives. Malcolm joined me there. He topped up my glass from the bottle. "They've been cutting flowers", he said, almost pathetically.

Laura's tight-fitting gardening gloves were bulged on the finger on which she wears her rings. In the dark, inside the glove, I imagined them shining with commitment and convention. Esther Reids, Sweet Williams, late cornflowers, the last of them for the year, were bunched in their arms.

"Why is it?" I asked Malcolm. "Why do I respect women so much? I like them much more than men."

"Why not? After all, most of them are so much taller than you are."

We sat down together on the sofa. "In Gaelic", Malcolm said, "the name of this whisky means 'heaven'."

Our wives came in through the French doors, carrying their flowers.

"What's for dinner?" Malcolm shouted roughly. He shouted like a man angry at having been kept waiting, when, in fact, he had drunk so much whisky he thought it was later than it actually was.

"Do I", said Henrietta, "detect signs of strain?"

"They've been arguing", Laura said.

"It's *him*."

"Shut up", I said to Malcolm, giving him a push. "I'm going to ask them. I'm going to ask them what they think of us."

The Highbrow Hangover

Today I am feeling subfusc
and as brittle and brusque as a rusk,
most frighteningly friable—
no action is viable—
not a man nor a mouse but a husk!

Gavin Ewart

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Shirley Robin Letwin

The Idea of a Gentleman

Englishmen in Search of a Character

THE GENTLEMAN has become a figure of fun. He is supposed to be someone who has elegant manners and a fine appearance, owns an estate in the country but knows his way about London, covers his walls with ancestors, never seriously works, and looks with horror upon anyone engaged in trade—in short, a grand, inert and complacent idler. Echoes of this idea appear everywhere in popular usage—in the name of the famous cricket match, "Gentlemen *v.* Players"; in the opinion of Conrad's sailor that a gentleman must have a very thin backside because he sits so much; in letters to *The Times* arguing about whether a gentleman may wear a handkerchief in his pocket or own a Rolls-Royce. And it is the idea of a gentleman firmly endorsed in the latest book on the subject, where we are assured that the species, defined in this fashion, still survives although it is not easily found by the uninitiated "outside a few select private zoos called clubs."[1]

But even those who take the gentleman more seriously, on whatever else they may differ, agree that a gentleman has the fixity of a work of art and the same lack of life. This immobility is usually attributed to his being a member of a privileged class, so long and so well fortified by land, rank, and wealth that they are strangers to doubts as well as to aspirations and occupy themselves with rehearsing ancient and useless ceremonies. While it is acknowledged that others may learn to counterfeit these characteristics, the real gentleman is supposed to get them from his ancestors.

In saying this, those who now mock the gentleman seem to be echoing those who admired him in the past. The belief that he is "a man of ancestry" appeared as early as Chaucer, and can be found also in Shakespeare. In discourses such as Defoe's *Compleat Gentleman*, written in 1729, we are told that

> "our modern Acceptation of a Gentleman is this, A Person Born (for there lies the essence of Quality) of some known or Ancient family; whose Ancestors have at least for some time been rais'd above the class of mechanicks."

Distinguished historians like Hume, Macaulay, Stubbs, and Hallam have taken the gentleman to be a member of a social class called "the gentry", who were landowners occupying a rank between that of baron and yeoman. It is the definition that has all along been preferred by the makers of dictionaries. Any derivation of the word other than that of a "man of ancestry" was dismissed by Dr Johnson as "whimsical", and of the five definitions that he gave, the first is "a man of birth; a man of extraction though not noble." In the 17th-century dictionary of proverbs by Tilley, a gentleman without an estate is declared to be "like a pudding without suet", which echoes Burghley, who instructed his son that a "gentleman that selles an Acre of Land, looseth an ounce of credite, for Gentilitie is nothing but ancient Riches."[2] Richardson's *New Dictionary of the English Language* of 1844 says that the gentleman is "born of or descended from a good family." This remains the first definition in the current *Oxford English Dictionary*—

> "A man of gentle birth, or having the same heraldic status as those of gentle birth; properly one who is entitled to bear arms, though not ranking among the nobility. . . ."

[1] Douglas Sutherland, *The English Gentleman* (Debretts Peerage Ltd., 1978) p. XI.

[2] *Certaine Precepts* (London, 1617), p. 8, in R. Kelso, *The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century* (1929), p. 28. See p. 27 for further examples of this view, along with an emphasis on ancestry, although Kelso also says: "The assumption throughout, however . . . was that some distinction existed in the individual which raised him above his fellows."

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NEVERTHELESS, THE DEFINITION OF a gentleman as a "man of ancestry" was always rejected by some and never completely accepted by anyone. Nor can the dispute be resolved by consulting the derivation of the word because that is just as much at issue. The English "gentleman" has been derived from the Norman-French *gentil-homme*, a man of birth and family; from the ancient Latin, *gentiles*, someone belonging to the same class or family (*gens*) or, as Cicero maintained, a man of free-born ancestry: from the medieval Latin, *gentiles*, used as a synonym for "barbarian", to designate the Germanic conquerors of the Romans;[3] and also from the Greek *eugenia*. But whatever its derivation, Sir George Sitwell established at the beginning of this century that the earliest use of "gentleman" in England did *not* designate a member of a particular social class.[4] And this conclusion has been emphatically supported by the genealogical investigations of the former Garter King at Arms, Sir Anthony Wagner, as well as by other recent work on the history of England.[5]

Sitwell pointed out that Chaucer speaks of knights, esquires, merchants, franklins and yeomen, but never of someone who has the status of a gentleman. In the *Lytel Jeste of Robyn Hode*, gentleman denotes a freeman. This meaning appears also in *Piers Plowman*, where it is said that the whole Jewish nation were originally gentlemen, but have since the death of Christ fallen to "lowe cheorles." In enumerations of classes in legal documents before the 15th century, whether in the poll tax, a certificate of non-villeinage, a subsidy of roll, or a petition, there is no mention of gentlemen. Only after the time of Henry VI was "gentleman" used to designate a distinct social status, and this was because the statute of 1413 required every defendant to give his "estate, degree, and mystery." Younger sons of nobility, who had no title, land, military rank, or fixed occupation and therefore could not claim any established legal name, called themselves "gentleman." Anyone who insists that the word is in origin a label for a social status must conclude that the first "gentlemen" were people charged with assault, murder, and house-breaking.

Sitwell produces equally strong evidence against the belief that a gentleman denotes a member of a class who have the right, by birth, to bear arms. Arms were first used merely as insignia to identify warriors and could be displayed on the shield of anyone who proved himself worthy of "being known by arms." Families with pedigrees that can be traced to Edward III, but never had any reason to bear arms, cannot claim any right to arms, whereas descendants of husbandmen can do so without question. If arms make a gentleman, then some of the oldest and grandest families are excluded by birth from the ranks of gentlemen, and some of the humblest are assured of the title. In later history, when the "right to arms" became more widely spread it continued to be connected with service and birth. Arms could be claimed as a right by anyone who held public office, and a herald could not refuse a grant of arms to a mayor,

[3] R. T. Hampson, *Origines Patriciae* (1846), pp. 348–50, maintains that "it nowhere appears that the subjugators of Britannia adopted the distinction" and that therefore "gentleman must be regarded as an exotic title, and its precise signification is to be found, not in the circumstances of its origin, but in its subsequent history. . . ."

[4] G. Sitwell, "The English Gentleman", *The Ancestor*, no. 1 (1902) pp. 58–103.

[5] Anthony Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages* (1939); *English Genealogy* (1960); *English Ancestry* (1961). Whether "gentleman" designates a status is part of a much broader historical question which is not my concern here. I have summarised in the text the historical conclusions on which I have relied. In addition to other works cited, see M. Bloch, *Land and Work in Medieval Europe* (tr. J. E. Anderson, 1967); G. C. Brodbrick, *English Land and English Landlords* (1881); A. Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism* (1978); Henry Maine, *Lectures on the Early History of Institutions* (1875); *Dissertations on Early Law and Custom* (1883); F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *History of English Law before the Time of Edward I* (1968), 2 vols; J. H. Round, *Feudal England* (1895); *Studies in Peerage and Family History* (1901); *The King's Serjeants and Officers of State* (1911); Paul Vinogradoff, *Villeinage in England* (1892); *The Growth of the Manor* (1920); A. L. Poole, *Obligations of Society in the XII and XIII Centuries* (1949). For later developments, see H. R. Trevor-Roper, "The Gentry 1540–1640", *Economic History Review* (supplements), no. 1 (1953). The literature in the controversy that followed is summarised in J. H. Hexter, "Storm Over the Gentry", ENCOUNTER (May 1958), reprinted in Hexter, *Reappraisals in History* (1961).

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provost, or bailiff of a corporate town. In the 16th century, when the heralds became powerful, they granted arms to masters in universities, doctors in the church, students of common law. But it had always been permissible to adopt arms for oneself, provided that they belonged to no one else, from which it follows that, if arms make a gentleman, anyone who takes the trouble to invent an armorial seal for himself can be one.

In short, when "gentleman" appears in medieval literature and legal records, the man so named might be of any rank going. He might as easily be a humble free tenant, a franklin, or a husbandman, as a baron, knight, or esquire. It is not at all unusual to find an identification such as "husbandman, alias merchant, alias gentleman, alias woolman, alias yeoman." There are references to the "king's menial gentlemen", but also to the Earl of Salisbury as a gentleman. Lists of "gentry" are a catalogue of knights, esquires, and men of influence and substance, who might at other times be designated as "valetti."

THAT THIS floating quality in the social status of a gentleman remained unchanged in modern times is confirmed by a variety of witnesses. Discerning foreigners have regularly expressed their astonishment at finding that a man might come of a grand and ancient family and not be a gentleman. Madame de Staël observed (in her *Letters on England*) that being called a gentleman is "the first condition for obtaining respect in England in any class" which not even the "splendour of the highest rank" could induce knowing Englishmen to mistake, and that, however high his birth, if a man lack the moral quality, "you will soon hear it said, even by persons of the lower class, 'Though he be a lord, he is not a gentleman.'" The remark that "a king may make a nobleman but he cannot make a gentleman" is an ancient commonplace that has been attributed to Henry VIII. Defoe reported a similar tale about Charles II: "The king understood that a title no more makes a gentleman than the lyon's skyn would make the ass a lyon. . . ." Victorian children were told how, when his old nurse begged James I to make her son "a gentleman", he answered, "I'll mak' him a baronet gin ye like, luckie, but the de'l himsel' couldn' mak him a *gentleman*." And the reverse of this, that even a duke may also be a gentleman, just as tellingly establishes the title's independence from class.

The belief that the English regard for gentlemen reflects a rigid social stratification is further undermined by the accumulating evidence that, from early medieval times, there has always been much movement in England from one status to another and a remarkable confusion of classes. England never conformed to the popular picture of a so-called feudal hierarchy which arranged everyone neatly under the headings of unfree villeins holding land in return for rural work, socagers holding by rent, knights and sergeants holding by military service, clergy holding by ecclesiastical obligations. There was not one centralised hierarchy, but several parallel hierarchies, and a high place in one did not determine rank in another. A man who held the military rank of knight might have been lord of several manors, or of one, or of none. And conversely, lords of manors and descendants of ancient families might, in the military hierarchy, rank as low as "valet" or "yeoman." Within any single hierarchy, a man might hold a number of different ranks, each attached to a different sort of holding in land, and so have to meet several different kinds of obligation.

EVEN THOUGH there were references, in the 12th and 13th centuries, to a distinction between free and servile (in the sense of villein or serf, not slave), recent research, following Maitland, has emphasised that there was no hard line between free and unfree in medieval England, but rather many different combinations of obligations and privileges. With regard to one of his holdings, a man might owe work and be a villein; but on other holdings he might pay rent or owe different kinds of services, and for some purposes, the so-called unfree villein could sue his lord in the king's court just as if he were a free man. So confusing was the mixture, that the courts were regularly called upon to decide questions such as whether a man who rendered the services of a villein might not nevertheless claim the rights of free tenement, or conversely, whether a man who paid rent might not nevertheless be judged a villein.

Nor was there any fixed relation between wealth and status—there were "free" cotters who had hardly any land to their name, and villeins who not only bought their way out of labour services but collected enough savings to acquire the whole of the lord's demesne. Mixed marriages were one of the main sources of the confusion and their frequency indicates that there were no great barriers between one condition and another. The story of Cinderella could come true in England without the help of a fairy godmother—the son of a lord might

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marry the daughter of his father's villein. But it was also possible for the mighty to fall and there are knightly families who descended into servitude.

AS A RESULT, no man in England can safely boast of his ancestors. The founders of the great house of Howard, Dukes of Norfolk, are said to have been villeins, or perhaps Norfolk franklins of English origin. The Bishop of Winchester, who founded Winchester College and New College, Oxford, and became Chancellor of England, was probably a husbandman's son. Geoffrey Boleyn of Salle, whose father was supposed to be a villein, started as a hatter in London, married a baron's daughter and became Mayor of London; his great grandson, Thomas Boleyn, became Earl of Wiltshire and Ormond and the father of Anne Boleyn, which makes Queen Elizabeth I the sixth in descent from a villein.

In a later period, a typical example of the irregularities in English lineage is Jane Austen's family. Her great-grandfather was a scion of wealthy clothiers and had five sons. The eldest inherited the estate, and the others were apprenticed to an attorney, a haberdasher, a surgeon, and a stationer. The attorney, who grew rich, paid for the education of the surgeon's orphan son, who became the Rev. George Austen, married the great-niece of a duke, and was Jane's father. Of his sons, one became a clergyman, one a country gentleman, and two were admirals. Among their descendants, there are academics, members of the professions, a royal spouse, a grocer's assistant, and a bricklayer's apprentice. And this pattern appears in her novels, unnoticed by those who keep insisting that all her characters belong to a highly restricted class. The very conventional Mrs Bennet, whose husband owns an estate of two thousand a year, is the daughter of an attorney, the sister-in-law of a solicitor, and the sister of a tradesman—and one of her daughters marries an aristocrat who seeks the company of the uncle who is a tradesman.

MANY REASONS have been suggested for the absence in England of sharp social divisions. It has been said that the Norman invasion shattered the old social system without replacing it so that there survived a multiplicity of orders and consequently much interlacing of classes. The strength of English kings is supposed to have prevented the formation of a closed order of nobility which meant that it was constantly receiving new blood, while on the other hand, the rule of primogeniture, that sent younger sons into the world of trade or adventure, led to a regular mixing of nobility with commoners in business enterprises and professions.

But however the social set-up of England acquired its character, the pattern is clear. Though there were a great number and variety of social distinctions, they were never barriers to movement and did not isolate one order from another, with the result that it was impossible to identify anyone unequivocally or permanently with a given status. The English nobility was not distinguished by legal and fiscal privileges denied to outsiders; poor freeholders possessed the same parliamentary franchise as their grander neighbours; and men of all conditions engaged in many common enterprises and regularly intermarried. That institutions like the public schools flourished testifies to a widespread belief that "new men" could learn the ways of the old and join their ranks. And whatever else the controversy about the rise of the gentry may have failed to demonstrate, it established that what we now call "social mobility" is an old English pastime.[6]

[6] Sir Anthony Wagner points out that this was made possible "not by an absence of class distinctions but a lofty structure with many shallow steps, [and] even those who stood still might find that the ground had moved under them" (*English Genealogy*, p. 9).

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THE UNUSUAL FREEDOM of movement in England and independence of individuals from fixed ties to any one group has impressed a distinguished line of foreign observers. It was emphasised by Montesquieu in his *Spirit of the Laws*. But Tocqueville felt that Montesquieu's remark, "I am now in a country which has little resemblance to the rest of Europe", when he visited England in 1739, did not go nearly far enough. The most "exclusive" and "powerful" feature that made England "so unlike the rest of Europe", Tocqueville insisted, was the complete destruction there of "the system of caste":

> "The nobility and the middle classes of England followed the same business, embraced the same professions, and what is far more significant, intermarried with each other."

Even though Tocqueville derived "gentleman" from *gentilhomme*, neglected its medieval history, and mistook the character of medieval England, he linked the oddity of "gentleman" to its not being confined to members of one rank.[7]

Mme de Staël gave a graphic account of the easy movement from class to class in England:

> "If the son of a common shopkeeper, or even of a mechanic displays superior talents at the bar, he may rise without obstacle to the rank of lord chancellor; enter the house of peers with an hereditary title. . . . One of his sisters may marry a descendant of the Howards or the Percys, and become related to all the great nobility celebrated in the history of England. Another, married at an earlier age, may be the wife of one of her own class, and remain in it. One of his brothers may have followed the profession of arms, and obtained a peerage by his bravery, as he has done by his learning and talents. Another, less fortunate, may continue in the shop of his father, or in the office of an attorney: without this great difference between the members of the same family exciting astonishment in any one. I am not here making gratuitous suppositions: whoever has a little studied the domestic conditions of England, knows as well as I, that similar combinations have existed and may exist again. . . ."

But she emphasised as well another peculiarity of England, that the easy mingling of orders was combined with "a decided propensity for distinctions of rank", indeed a remarkable interest in them. And yet, the people were free both from "aristocratical prejudices" and "jealousy of the higher classes." Though intense and widespread, the English respect for rank never became servile, Mme de Staël found, because it was

> "always united with a very just and even nice appreciation of the real merit of the persons on the one hand, and with a profound sentiment of their own rights as citizens of a free country on the other."

The people were "too proud to claim anything but a free career." And as a result England displayed a remarkable national unity.

ALL OF THIS makes it reasonable to conjecture that the title of gentleman flourished just because it had nothing to do with "class", as defined by birth, occupation, wealth, or rank. In a society where distinctions of status and fortune were constantly changing, and were therefore confusing and unreliable, being known as a "gentleman" may have indicated a more stable affinity among men of widely different origins and positions.

That is the moral of the Victorian story, *John Halifax, Gentleman*. When the hero, who started life as an abandoned orphan, had at last made his fortune, bought a house, and kept a carriage, his son said: "We are gentlefolk now", but John Halifax replied, "We always were, my son." Much the same moral is taught in another Victorian novel, Grant Allen's *Philistia*, which is a continuous conversation about class and culture. The well-bred parson, who is the son of a shoemaker, explains to the Socialist, who insists on the importance of ancestry, that

> "the gentleman may be the final outcome and efflorescence of many past generations of quiet

[7] A. de Tocqueville, *On the State of Society in France before the Revolution of 1789* (London, 1856), pp. 151–3; 179–81.

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> unobtrusive, working-man culture . . . there are working-men's sons who go through the world as gentlemen mixing with gentlemen and never giving the matter of their birth one moment's serious consideration."

These Victorians echo what was said all along by their ancestors. In that widely quoted Elizabethan book, *The Gouverneur* (1531), Sir Thomas Elyot, having derived "gentleman" from the Greek *eugenia*, says that it signifies "goode kinde or lignage, but in a more briefe manner it was after called nobilitie", which is "only the prayse and surname of vertue" and not, as "after the vulgarre opinion of men", dependent on ancient lineage or great possessions, and to suppose so is "errour and folye." *The Institution of a Gentleman* (1568) declares that the first gentleman was he in whom "vertuous and gentle deedes did first appear." A later Elizabethan book (1586) makes the same point: "A Gentleman or a Nobleman is he (for I do wittingly confound these voices) which is knowne, and through the heroycall virtues of his life, talked of in euery man's mouth." In the 17th-century classic, *Titles of Honour* (1614), John Selden speaks of a threefold use of "gentleman", theological or Christian, philosophical or from manners and virtue, and political or civil; and he pays attention only to the last. The moral is the same in *The Gentleman's Calling* of 1673: "He that desired to ennoble his Family, would then begin at his Mind, cast out thence all base and degenerous Inclinations, and make himself a Gentleman without help of Heraldry." And it is what Steele wrote in the *Tatler* (1710), "The appellation of a Gentleman is never to be affixed to a Man's Circumstances but to his Behaviour in them."

NO DOUBT SUCH REMARKS can be taken to indicate a concern with reassuring those who have risen in the world that they are the equals of longer established families. Certainly, the *parvenu*'s friend, Samuel Smiles, said that "He is the true gentleman, whatever be his station in life—who possesses and displays the gentler graces." But if so, we must conclude that since medieval times a considerable number of Englishmen have felt themselves and were recognised to be better than their antecedents would suggest.

WHATEVER THE REASONS for the gentleman's importance in England, how to identify a gentleman has continued to tease the English imagination. The large literature occupied with the subject shows that it has been something of a national hobby.[8] By the end of the 16th century there were a number of books entirely devoted to it: *The Institucion of a Gentleman; The Gentleman's Companion; The Gentleman's Calling; The Gentleman Instructed; The Compleat Gentleman.* The flow of discourses on the gentleman became a flood in the 19th century. *The Cornhill*, the *National Review*, and the *Contemporary Review* carried long essays. Sermons were preached on "The True Gentleman" and "What is a Gentleman?" And many books were written on *The Character of the Gentleman, The English Gentleman, A Fine Old English Gentleman, Quite a Gentleman.* This is to say nothing of incidental disquisitions in poetry, novels, and essays, in Locke's *Thoughts Concerning Education,* Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*, Newman's *Idea of a University*, Thackeray's *Book of Snobs* and *Pleasures of a Fogy*, John Mill's *Logic*, and Ruskin's *Modern Painters.*

The Victorian social reformers, who, like reformers today, insisted most stridently on identifying the gentleman by ancestry, nevertheless made wonderfully contorted efforts to deny, while affirming, the definition by birth.

Ruskin started by declaring that the "primal, literal, and perpetual meaning of the word, gentleman, is a man of pure race, well bred, in the sense that a horse or a dog is well bred. The so-called higher classes, being generally of purer race than the lower, have retained the true idea and the convictions associated with it, but are afraid to speak out, and equivocate about it in public." Then, by an ingenious twist (in *Modern Painters*, Vol. V), Ruskin attributed their equivocation to a desire of the upper classes to justify their living off the labour of others, "with which the term has nothing whatever to do", and he went on to argue that, as the purity of moral habits transmitted by blood is what identifies the gentleman, someone of the lower

[8] A comprehensive, though haphazard anthology of such references can be found in A. Smythe Palmer's *The Ideal of a Gentleman, or a Mirror for Gentlefolk: A Portrayal in Literature from the Earliest Times* (1908) which is an enlarged version of *The Perfect Gentleman* (London, 1892). Palmer did not try to explain "the central idea" that defines a gentleman but he says firmly that his work is "designed to instruct a gentleman not as to what he should *do*", but as to "what he is *to be*, always and under all circumstances", and that this has nothing to do with the "cut-and-dry rules" of manuals which pretend "to turn out 'gentlemen' according to pattern." For a much smaller anthology, see Thomas Ballantyne, *Essays in Mosaic* (London, 1870).

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classes may have noble blood "since his family may have been ennobling it by pureness of moral habit for many generations and yet may not have got any title or other sign of nobleness attached to their names. . . ." John Stuart Mill managed to avoid committing himself more subtly by saying (in his *System of Logic*, 1851) that "the word, gentleman, originally meant simply a man born in a certain rank" but gradually came to "connote all such qualities or adventitious circumstances as were usually found to belong to persons of that rank." And this explained why, in "one of its vulgar acceptations", it means "anyone who lives without labour" and in its "more elevated significations", it signifies "the conduct, character, habits, and outward appearance in whomsoever found which . . . were expected to belong to persons born and educated in a high position."

The one thing clearly agreed on in this large literature is that a gentleman need not be "a man of ancestry." Even Dr Johnson included among his five definitions—"a man raised above the vulgar by his character or post." The current *Oxford English Dictionary* follows suit by adding that the word might also "be applied to a person of distinction without precise definition of rank" and that the gentleman is one whose gentle birth is accompanied by appropriate qualities and behaviour; hence, in general, "a man of chivalrous instincts and fine feelings." Though Defoe gave what seems to be a clear verdict for defining the gentleman by blood, he went on to "entreat" those who think of themselves as "ancient gentry" to "stoop so low as to admit that vertue, learning, a liberal education, a degree of natural acquir'd knowledge are necessary to finish the born gentleman . . ." and he ended with a plea for bringing "the blood and the merit together" because only that can "produce the best and most glorious piece of God's creation, a compleat gentleman." Others have had recourse to discovering a change of meaning over time in the manner of the *Quarterly Review*, which said that though "the term, gentleman, signified nothing originally but 'a man of family' it has come to be applied to all who share the position, manners, cultivation, etc. of men and family. . . ."

THE AMBIVALENCE about whether "gentleman" designates a particular social status is far from a late development. It appears in Chaucer's "though he be no gentil born he is gentil because he doeth as longeth to a gentleman." In the history of King Arthur, gentlemen are described as those who "beare old armes, of right", but we are told also, "For he that is of gentle blood will draw him until gentle tatches [dispositions] to follow the custome of noble gentlemen." There are many references in Shakespeare's plays to a gentleman's social standing, but also many lines which deny its importance. Another Elizabethan, W. Harrison (1577), boldly faced both ways: "Gentlemen be those whom their race and bloud, or at least their virtues, do make noble and known."[9] Selden did the same in his *Table Talk* (1689) by talking about gentlemen "of blood" and "by creation", although he concluded that "morally the gentleman by creation be the better; for the other may be a debauched man. . . ." Remarks about the social position of a gentleman often intrude into comments purporting to say that it is irrelevant, as in Lamb's remark that "Joseph Paice of Bread Street Hill . . . though bred a Presbyterian and brought up a merchant was the finest gentleman of his time." Throughout, there are many firm and wholly unqualified assertions to the effect that any true definition of a gentleman must be wide enough to include *some* kings and *some* labourers. And there is no better summary of the difficulty felt by everyone who has tried his hand at defining the gentleman than the valiant Elizabethan effort to sort things out: "Of gentlemen, some be called gentel gentel, others gentel ungentill, and a third sort, ungentell gentell."

[9] W. Harrison, *Description of England*, ed. G. Edelen (Ithaca, 1968).

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THAT ONLY the vulgar view of a gentleman makes him a person of fortune, rank, or fashion is a steady theme. It is the bluntly stated moral of *A Fool of Quality*, which from 1770 was steadily republished to the end of the 19th century. The same idea appears indirectly in the condemnation throughout English literature of the "snob" as the antipode of a gentleman, and Thackeray's definition of a snob is the standard one:

> "You, who forget your own friends, meanly to follow those of a higher degree, are a Snob; you who are ashamed of your poverty and blush for your calling, are a Snob; as are you who boast of your pedigree, or are proud of your wealth."

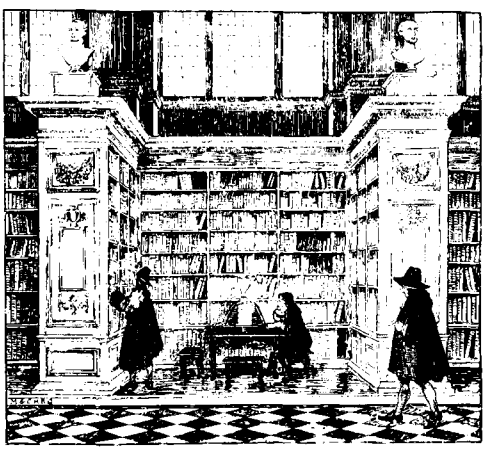
Nor would any of the snob's enemies soften the judgment that "a gentleman in the vulgar, superficial way of understanding the word is the Devil's Christian." Even as late as 1961, the gentleman was described as a demanding model of moral conduct, which is peculiarly "compatible with all forms of social and practical endeavour", and the author condemned the popular idea that a gentleman displays his lineage in the airs of an effete dandy as a gross misconception.[10]

BUT IF the literature devoted to defining the gentleman bears out the historical conclusion that he is not a man of ancestry, wealth, power or fashion, the quality that truly defines a gentleman is hardly obvious.

There are frequent references to something called "the look of a gentleman." Even so radical and unconventional a writer as William Hazlitt assures us that one can tell a gentleman "infallibly at the first glance." Some say that the gentleman can be recognised by a special elegance and propriety in his appearance, that his carriage is "neither apish nor sullen", that he always dresses as cleanly as he speaks, and is as meticulous about the things that surround him as about his person and his clothing. But on the other hand, it is also said that a gentleman is indifferent to all such matters. Sterne said that "Nature" had "wrote Gentleman with so fair a hand in every line of his countenance" that even Uncle Toby's "tarnished gold-laced hat and huge cockade of flimsy taffeta became him." There are many variations on the dictum that a gentleman's apparel "is more comely than costly" and that he never wears anything so fine that he is afraid of spoiling it. Both before and after the 18th century there are frequent denunciations of those who consider adornments like "a bagwig, a tasselled waistcoat, a new fashioned snuff-box, a sword-knot" essential for a gentleman, and there is complete support for the 17th-century writer who declared that a gentleman is "a man of himself, without addition of either taylor, milliner, seamster, or haberdasher." One might almost conclude that a gentleman is indistinguishable from a country bumpkin after reading Hazlitt's description of how far from elegant were the looks of a man whom he considers "a gentleman of the first water", who "sauntered down St James's Street as if he were strolling along his own garden", wearing "a large slouched hat and an old shabby drab-coloured coat buttoned across his breast without a cape", looking neither graceful nor dignified and yet every inch a gentleman. But what constitutes the look of a gentleman remains, as Hazlitt said, "something more easily felt than described."

THE GENTLEMAN'S TALENT for being agreeable in a variety of circumstances with a variety of people is attributed by some to the fact that he manages what may now seem to be a miracle—to treat everyone as an equal without disregarding differences of rank. Coleridge said that a gentleman showed

> "respect to others in such a way as at the same time implies in his own feelings an habitual and assured anticipation of reciprocal respect from them to himself. In short, the gentlemanly character arises out of the feeling of equality acting as a habit, yet flexible to the varieties of



[10] Simon Raven, *The English Gentleman* (1961), pp. 15, 59, 63.

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rank, and modified without being disturbed or superseded by them. . . ."

Biographia Literaria (1817), vol. 2, pp. 208–9

Hazlitt put the same observation somewhat differently: "a gentleman is one who understands and shows every mark of deference to the claims of self-love in others and exacts it in return from them. . . ." But others have fastened on the self-assurance of a gentleman which, they say, makes him good-humoured because it keeps him from taking offence. Still another explanation emphasises that a gentleman is free from the vulgar disposition to put a high value on himself, which prevents a gentleman from supposing that he is or ought to be the centre of everyone's attention, and therefore renders him an agreeable companion. Cardinal Newman attributed a gentleman's pleasantness to what he refrains from doing, but added that a gentleman is anxious to remove "obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him", is willing to fall in with whatever others are doing, and generally "carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar, or jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast, all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment; his great concern being to make everyone at their ease and at home." The same stress on mildness appears in A. and J. Hare's *Guesses at Truth* (1827). The real gentleman, they say,

> "should be gentle in everything—in carriage, temper, constructions, aims, desires. He ought therefore to be mild, calm, quiet, even temperate—not hasty in judgment, not exorbitant in ambition, not overbearing, not proud, not rapacious, not oppressive; for these things are contrary to gentleness."

ABOUT MANNERS and the gentleman, there is at least as much vagueness and confusion.

Everyone agrees that manners count and yet no one takes them to be of a gentleman's essence. The notion that conformity to a "code" of behaviour, to the "convenances" of society, of etiquette, or the rules of fashion identifies a gentleman is steadily denounced as a sign of vulgarity. The stickler for the proprieties of the dinner table or the correctness of his pronunciation is definitely held to be not a gentleman but a genteel *parvenu*. Indeed those who merely pretend to be scrupulous about such matters offend less than those who genuinely are. Lord Chesterfield is regularly taken to task for failing to recognise that naturalness is the mark of a gentleman. Some even consider a degree of awkwardness essential, and many emphasise that "impudent ease" should not be mistaken for the bearing of a gentleman. Hazlitt declared that a man may not only "have the manners of a gentleman without having the look", but also "the character . . . in the more abstracted point of view, without the manners." The most systematic Victorian discussion of a gentleman flatly denies that manners belong to the "actual nature and substance" of a gentleman:

> "We must, all of us, know a man whose manners leave very much to desire, and yet to whom it would be impossible to refuse the title. A *finished* gentleman such an one may not be; but a gentleman he is notwithstanding."
>
> *W. J. Browne (1886)*

Nevertheless, everyone agrees that, whether it is due to his looks or his manners, he neither avoids nor courts notice, can be as much at ease among gamblers as among lords, and that generally there is a decorum about a gentleman that makes it peculiarly pleasant to be in his company. Steele described him as, "modest without bashfulness, obliging and complaisant without servility, cheerful and in good humour without noise." A similar description appears in the 17th century: "His behaviour will be affable and civil, not insolent and imperious. . . ." and again in the Victorian book, *A Fine Old Gentleman*, where we are told not only that a gentleman displays none of the "snobbishness of the upstart" or the "arrogance" that "sometimes makes established rank and position unsufferable", but also that his words are "few and weighty" and spoken always in "a calm voice." In short, it is regularly suggested that the modest, complaisant, cheerful, affable behaviour characteristic of a gentleman is somehow connected with certain inner qualities, but those named are far from coherent and often plainly contradictory.

BUT NONE OF THESE WRITERS explains how a gentleman can preserve such mildness while fulfilling the other obligations with which they saddle him—to defend the helpless against oppression, to fight valiantly for what he considers right, to stand ready to support a just cause against every opposition, to be capable of lasting indignation. In saying that the gentleman "forgives or resents duly but is

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never revengeful . . . gentle, but not fearful", Samuel Smiles was repeating an old and steady refrain. A gentleman is expected to be staunch also in maintaining his self-respect, to be able to go his own way and to disregard the opinions of others. Indeed throughout the literature on the gentleman, his readiness to stand fast and to fight is regularly contrasted to the disposition of the vulgar to falter and give way.

THE MANY CONTRADICTIONS in the assorted virtues assigned to a gentleman are hardly surprising since there is no serious attempt to indicate what makes them hang together. Dazzling though they are, the lists of virtues seem totally miscellaneous.

To be told that a gentleman "is in nature kind, in demeanour courteous, in allegiance loyal, and in religion zealous, in service faithful, and in reward bountiful . . ."—that "if thou hast a good Soul, good Education, and art Virtuous, well qualified in thy conditions, Honest, Ingenuous, learned, hating all baseness", thou art "a true Gentleman, nay perfectly Noble, though born of Thersites"—that a warm heart, an affectionate nature, "manly energy and uncompromising dignity of principle", prudence, tact and forbearance, an "undaunted" spirit, indomitable "bravery and masculine decision of character", "tenderness and sweetness of disposition" make a "fine old English gentleman"—hardly distinguishes a gentleman from a saint.

Nevertheless, the lists are not perfectly haphazard. Certain qualities are more regularly mentioned. There is always some reference to "polish . . . calmness . . . and collectedness." "Polish" obviously refers not to manners but to a quality of character. Steele said that in all the "great and solid perfections" that distinguish a gentleman, there is "a beautiful gloss and varnish" which is like the genius of the poet that "irradiates all the compass of his knowledge by the lustre and brightness of his imagination." This "polish" appears to have some connection with the "collectedness of mind" and "the liberal disposition" which are said to distinguish the gentleman from "the clown, the gossip, the backbiter, the dullard, coward, braggart, fretter, swaggerer, ruffian, bully and blackguard." Defoe suggested that the gentleman's "polish" and "collectedness" spring from an ability to make distinctions that other men miss so that the gentleman can be

> "frugal without avarice, managing without rigor, humble without meanness, and great without hautyness; . . . pleasant without levity, grave without affectacion, and posses learning without pedantry or pride. . . ."

ANOTHER AND MORE PUZZLING quality regularly described as essential is "simplicity." Archbishop Trench remarked that "to say that a person is perfectly simple is, to my mind, the highest praise you can give." The *Saturday Review* celebrated the late Lord Hampden for being "as fine an example as could be found of that union of simplicity with dignity . . . which we are apt to believe is the special characteristic of the genuine English country gentleman." The plainest statement of what is involved in simplicity is given by that 17th-century master of definitions, Richard Brathwaite, who said that the gentleman is "a man of himself" because "no object can withdraw him from himself" and "he admires nothing more than a constant spirit . . . embraceth nothing with more intimacie than a prepared resolution", and "moderation of his affections hath begot in him an absolute command and conquest of himself. . . ." But why "simplicity" should be admired or considered a cardinal virtue for the gentleman remains unexplained.

Everyone agrees, too, that what distinguishes a gentleman is not unworldliness, but rather industry and practicality. And this is stressed as much in the 17th century as in the 19th. A gentleman, Brathwaite says, "understands that neither health commeth from the clouds without seeking, nor wealth from the clods without digging", "holds idlness to bee the very moth of man's time", and

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therefore, "day by day", has his "taske imposed." Nevertheless, he is not so "Stoicall" as to "contemn" pleasure, but rather enjoys hospitality and other recreations, though he would never let "a moment of content" deprive him of an "eternity of comfort." Although the author of *A Gentleman's Calling* opens by deploring that "a Gentleman is now supposed to be only a thinge of pleasure" which makes it seem "a ridiculous solecism to define his Calling" since his "very Essence is thought to consist in having none", he describes this idea as a project to rob the gentleman of his birthright and reduce him to "that vulgar Mass, from which divine Providence and humane Laws have distinguished him."

THE OTHER VIRTUES always attributed to a gentleman are courage, courtesy, and truthfulness, but there is a special stress on truthfulness: "It is a common saying amongst us", Brathwaite writes, "that a gentleman will doe like a gentleman; he scorns to doe unlike himself, for his word is his gage and his promise such a tie as his reputation will not suffer him to dispense with." W. J. Browne, in *The National Review* of April 1886, concludes his careful analysis with: "This then is my definition: A gentleman is one to whom discourtesy is a sin and falsehood a crime." All the writers take pains to point out that keeping promises and not telling lies are only symptoms of the deeper honesty that distinguishes a gentleman and reserve their most serious censure for the subtler manifestations of falsity such as affectation, inconsistency, hypocrisy. But we are not told just what constitutes the more profound honesty expected of a gentleman, or what connects the courtesy with the honesty, or for that matter, with the courage required of a gentleman. Certainly none of this enables us to see what made it so obvious to Robert Louis Stevenson that Scott, Gordon, Wellington, and Shelley were clearly gentlemen—and that Napoleon, Byron, Lockhart were "as surely cads and the two first, cads of the first water."

YET FOR ALL the elusiveness of the gentleman, everyone agrees that the word describes something so peculiarly English that it cannot be translated.

All candidates for a French equivalent—*gentilhomme, homme comme il faut, galant homme,* or *homme de mérite*—were firmly turned down by Mme de Staël. In his *Notes on the English*, Taine explained that "We have not the word because we have not the thing." The German, V. A. Huber, who wrote a classic history (1843) of the English universities, said the same about his own country—"we have nothing of the kind." And his opinion has been emphatically seconded in this century by another German, W. Dibelius, whose study (1930) of English character became a handbook for foreigners which instructed them that

> "Among the things every Englishman is proud of is the fact that the idea of the gentleman is peculiar to England. It is a fact."

It might seem that the Italians have a claim on the gentleman because of the popularity of Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* in Tudor England. But though the book may have encouraged similar reflections on the gentleman, he had long before been established in England, and many of the arts that Castiglione required of the courtier, such as skill in dissimulation and flattery, have been utterly proscribed for gentlemen. The Castilian *cavallero* perhaps comes closest to the English term, but it has never been adopted as a synonym.

Though Englishmen have occasionally awarded the title to men who were not English—Cicero, Charles X and Don Quixote have been called gentlemen—they have generally agreed that

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that had been done to the Soviet Union, would not be as anxious to have our help in the post-War period as he had been during the War. He did not realise how tough-minded the Russians would be and with what determination they would stick to the long-term goals of world revolution.

—One adjective often used by historians to describe Roosevelt, and especially his attitude to Stalin, is "naive." you knew Roosevelt from your common childhood. Was he naive?

HARRIMAN: This is a complex question. Roosevelt was hopeful that his personal relationship with Stalin could carry on after the War, but Stalin had no regard whatever for personal relationships. He was thinking in a framework of ideology and power which was alien to the President. Roosevelt was confident in his ability to get other people to do things for him, and he was not entirely wrong in that—his ability to persuade people to change their minds was very considerable. But he was over-confident.

Naive? I do not like using the word to describe the character of a great man, but he was certainly over-optimistic about what he could achieve personally, as distinct from what he could as head of a powerful government.

—Was Roosevelt's "over-confidence" vis-à-vis *Stalin due to his lack of any profound knowledge of Bolshevik history and the world Communist movement generally?*

HARRIMAN: I don't know—I have never bothered to find out.

—You talk in your book of Roosevelt's inclination to "romance"—to engage in flights of the imagination which you personally tended to ignore.

HARRIMAN: He would "romance" when you went to see him and he did not want to tell you what was on his mind because his mind was not made up. He would talk all round the subject but would not give you an answer. He never said "I refuse to give you an answer", but you could sense very quickly that he had no intention of telling you. He had a strong belief that the President had the right, and in many cases the obligation, of not making up his mind until the last minute, because if he made a decision too soon, information might come in that would invalidate it.

This was in a sense highly frustrating for one who had to work with him, because it meant the lack of precise instructions. In another sense, however, it was very stimulating, because Roosevelt would give you the general line of his thinking, leaving it to you to use your own judgment in turning it into practical policy. This was an exciting thing to do. The responsibility was yours. If you made a mistake, you were out on a limb; but as I did not need a job to support myself, I did not mind running the risk of being fired!

—When I mentioned Roosevelt's inclination to day-dream I had one example especially in mind—his thoughts about the future of Lvov. He observed to you in 1944 that the Soviet-American-British controversy over the future of Lvov could be resolved by the simple expedient of appointing Lvov as a "Polish capitalist island" within the Soviet Union. He thought Stalin might agree to have the city governed by an international committee, leaving it to a future plebiscite to decide whether Lvov should finally belong to Poland or the Soviet Union.

This strikes me as a good example of Roosevelt's naivety. Anyone who could believe this after the Warsaw Uprising would have no difficulty with another and even less likely idea—that Stalin would permit parliamentary democracy to flourish in Eastern Europe after the War.

HARRIMAN: As you know, I tried to tell Roosevelt that Stalin would never permit a Polish capitalistic enclave within a Soviet-Ukrainian environment. But Roosevelt thought this would present no problem: the Ukrainian peasants would come to Lvov and sell their produce to the Poles for roubles. . . .

Without question, Roosevelt did not fully understand Soviet thinking, and I do not know if any of us did when it came to talking to the Soviet side directly. Roosevelt, to be fair to him, knew how to handle Stalin, as one could see at both Teheran and Yalta. Nevertheless, he was, as I say, more optimistic about being able to deal with Stalin than the facts justified. In the Spring of 1945 it was a great shock for him to find that Stalin was turning his back on the "Declaration on Liberated Europe" signed at Yalta, first, by installing a minority government of his own choosing in Rumania, and then trying to do the same in Poland—a case we regarded as being much more serious, and one which brought the Alliance close to breaking point. Roosevelt's telegrams to Stalin and Churchill, and his instructions to myself as his representative on the Anglo-American-Soviet commission dealing with the problem of the Polish government, show the depth of his concern. But even then, he did not allow his disappointment to run away with him. He was very firm with Stalin, but not angry to the point of wanting to slash back.

ROOSEVELT IS ON RECORD *as having said: "There is no doubt in my mind that after the War American and Soviet societies are going to converge." Was this not a gross misjudgment?*

HARRIMAN: Of course it was—it was nonsense. Roosevelt said this, and I think he believed it. He never understood the ideological vigour (as it then was) of the Communist faith. He never grasped the fact that Communism in Russia was not merely a political and economic system but an ideological faith.

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—Did you point this out to him at the time?

HARRIMAN: No, it was not for me to correct the President. From time to time I did remark to Roosevelt that I did not share his judgment of the Soviet system and Soviet intentions; but one had to accept Roosevelt as he was.

I knew Roosevelt pretty well. His brother was in my class at school, and I used to have meals with the Roosevelts in the first decade of the century. So I knew Roosevelt before he acquired the great qualities he did in fighting off the effects of polio; for there is no doubt that his victory over polio strengthened his character. I knew him before he had become as vigorous a man as he was when he was President. I was, therefore, not surprised by these lapses of his judgment. People expected the great man to be perfect in every way. But, of course, he was not—nobody is perfect.

II. Portrait of Stalin

SO MUCH HAS been written about Stalin's "cult of the personality" that I'd be curious to know a little more about Stalin's character as he appeared to you at the time.

Some historians, Isaac Deutscher for example, have stressed Stalin's coolness and "impersonality." He is described as a pragmatist—a doer rather than a thinker.

HARRIMAN: Stalin was very impersonal when you first met him. He did not go around shaking hands. But when he got interested he warmed up and shed his impersonality. But I agree that to the casual observer, and those who only saw him in public, he was cool.

But, then, there was also a warmer side to Stalin which I saw displayed in his attitude to Harry Hopkins. Hopkins, as you know, was a sick man. Nevertheless he made the long and hazardous trip to the Teheran Conference. When Stalin saw him enter the conference room, he got up, walked across the room and shook hands with him. I never saw him do that to anybody, not even Roosevelt. He was the only man that I ever saw Stalin show personal emotion for. Hopkins had won Stalin's admiration earlier in the War. He was one of the first Western envoys to go to Moscow shortly after the Russians had been attacked by Hitler. He made the difficult trip all the way around the North Sea to Archangel and down to Moscow. He had lost his pills and was not very well. Stalin saw all this and showed personal respect for Hopkins's courage.

—But was it not also that Hopkins brought Stalin, extremely hard-pressed as he was at the time, the vital news that Roosevelt "regarded Hitler as the enemy of mankind and that he therefore wished to aid the Soviet Union in its fight against Germany"? Whereupon Stalin asked for 20,000 anti-aircraft guns, thousands of fighter planes and bombers and a long list of other war materials?

HARRIMAN: No—he respected Hopkins's courage as a human being, not as a representative of the American President. I am only telling this story to show that Stalin did have a softer side to him which, I agree, did not come out very often, for we know well enough that he could be callous and brutal.

—Joseph E. Davies, US Ambassador to Moscow in 1936–38, saw a different Stalin from the one Isaac Deutscher describes.

> *"His brown eye is exceedingly kind and gentle. A child would like to sit in his lap and a dog would sidle up to him . . ."*

he wrote in Mission to Moscow. *Stalin was "clean-living, modest and retiring." Even Lord Beaverbrook commented after your joint meetings with Stalin in 1941 that Stalin was "a kindly man" who "practically never shows any impatience at all." And H. G. Wells: "I have never met a man more candid, fair and honest, and to these qualities it is, and to nothing occult or sinister, that he owes his tremendous undisputed ascendancy in Russia. . . . No one is afraid of him and everybody trusts him."*

The reverse side of this coin is best represented by Djilas. Stalin, for him, was

> *"the greatest criminal of all time, for in him was joined the criminal senselessness of Caligula with the refinement of a Borgia and the brutality of Czar Ivan the Terrible."*

HARRIMAN: Davies's view is utter nonsense, as indeed is his whole book. He never understood what was going on.

Beaverbrook was an enthusiast and a backer of the Soviet Union at almost any price—so much so that his "Russia-First" attitude worried Churchill. He wanted our joint mission to Moscow to sound like a great success and used it to build up his reputation with his Cabinet colleagues in London. In one of his cables from Moscow he boasted to the British War Cabinet that "the campaign laid down

The Beaverbrook-Harriman mission (1941)

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by Harriman and me" had been carried out without "any hitch." None of this was quite true. I took a much more sober view of what had been transacted and said so in a personal note to Roosevelt. Beaverbrook's exuberance sometimes carried him way beyond the facts. Hence his somewhat overdrawn characterisation of Stalin.

—What about Djilas's lapidary words?

HARRIMAN: For me, Djilas's witness carries much more importance. He was a dedicated leading Communist, but his disappointment with Stalin and the Stalinist system caused him to reject Communism and his own past with particular bitterness. So I would discount his judgment, too, or at least I would express my disenchantment with Stalin (if I were in Djilas's shoes) in a different way. Stalin was, to be sure, cold and highly suspicious, and when he acted on his suspicions he could be cruel and brutal; but I would have thought that comparing him with the sanguinary madman Caligula was not quite justified. I am more inclined to think that Khrushchev's account of Stalin's way of dealing with his associates was accurate and struck the right note.

YOU MAY NOT AGREE *with Djilas's reference to Caligula, but I should imagine you would not quarrel with his reference to Ivan the Terrible, seeing that in* Peace with Russia? *(1960) you quote with apparent approval an observation which Alexey Tolstoy once made to you:*

> *"If you want to understand the Kremlin of today . . . you must first understand the Kremlin of Ivan the Terrible."*

This is, incidentally, also a view strongly held by Professor Robert C. Tucker, one of Stalin's best-known American biographers.

Yet little in your memoirs reminds the reader that the man with whom you had so many crucial discussions in the Kremlin and elsewhere was a latter-day Ivan the Terrible who, in fact, cast himself in that role quite consciously. You portray a shrewd, well-informed, determined and somewhat home-spun politician with his eye on the main chance; but there is nothing terrifying or repulsive about him.[1] *Your book, if I may say so, did not leave me with the impression that its author was a privileged eyewitness at the court of a fearsome dictator and loathsome individual, no admirable though I found your memoirs in all other respects.*

HARRIMAN: You must understand that my business in Moscow was not to look at Stalin with the curiosity of an historian or the questioning eye of a political philosopher. I was sent there by the President to keep Russia in the War and save American lives. And as ideology had nothing to do with Roosevelt's decision to help Russia, I was not concerned with Soviet Party history, Stalin's record as Party leader, and the like.

People studying Stalin now are looking for evidence of blood and murder. *I* was looking for vigorous action in Stalin's war with Nazi Germany, and I did find in him a man of action and a man of leadership. I expected him to be tough, and he was tough, although (as I have said) he was also very polite. But his blunt words did not bother me nearly as much as they did Beaverbrook, for example. I went to see him as an equal. I had met so many important men in my time that I was not going to be awed by Stalin.

Now, Alexey Tolstoy did not say that Stalin was *like* Ivan the Terrible. He merely observed that "If you want to understand the Kremlin of today . . . you must first understand the Kremlin of Ivan the Terrible." This simply means that one could not understand Stalin's Russia without understanding Russian history and appreciating some of the, for us, appalling things which the Russian people were brought up with and were prepared to put up with. It wasn't that the Kremlin I saw somehow bore traces of the court of Ivan the Terrible, for (if I am not mistaken) Ivan was the monarch who murdered his son in a fit of anger. Stalin was not like that.

On the other hand, Stalin knew well enough that the Russian people's tremendous War effort had little to do with their support of the Communist system. Stalin—this is a point I want to stress—was a realist. He said to me in September 1941:

> "We are under no illusion that they [the Russian people] are fighting for us. They are fighting for Mother Russia."

Stalin was aware that the Party was unpopular and he himself hated in his capacity as Party leader. That is why he thought he had to protect himself against the germ of counter-revolution. He

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[1] Svetlana Alliluyeva tells a different story of Stalin:

". . . the cruel tragedies of those years didn't spare our family. In 1937 the brother of my father's first wife, an old-time Georgian Bolshevik, A. S. Svanidze, and his wife Maria were arrested. His sister Mariko was arrested, too. After that the husband of my mother's sister was arrested—the Polish Communist Stanislav Redens. The three Svanidzes and Redens perished in prison. Mama's sister was forbidden to visit us children. Her brother Paul died of a heart attack, shaken by the arrests of his relations and numerous friends, for whom he had vainly pleaded with my father. . . ."

"My mother's sister, Anna, had gone mad in prison and had come home a sick woman. Yevgenia Alliluyeva, the widow of Mother's brother, bore it all, but she said she had signed all the accusations set before her: spying, poisoning her husband, contacts with foreigners. 'You sign anything there', she would say, 'just to be left alone and not tortured! At night no one could sleep for the shrieks of agony in the cells. Victims screamed in an unearthly way, begging to be killed, better be killed. . . .' "

Only One Year (1969), pp. 148, 162

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had himself been a revolutionary, so he knew how underground movements began and developed. He was not going to let one come into being directed against himself. In this respect, then, there was something in Stalin's political behaviour that runs parallel with Ivan the Terrible's campaign against the boyars.

Stalin the War Leader, however, was popular, and there can be no doubt that he was the one who held the Soviet Union together after it had been smashed by Hitler's invasion. I do not think anyone else could have done it, and nothing that has happened since Stalin's death induces me to change that opinion.

It is quite true that Stalin made a desperate blunder in not preparing for Hitler's invasion. He evidently could not believe that Hitler would attack without talking to him again, because he was ready to make further concessions. The British had sent him several warnings, all of which he disregarded. He thought these were a provocation, the British trying to get him to mobilise and thus to bring on Hitler's attack (he was conscious of 1914, when the Czar's mobilisation caused the Kaiser to mobilise and made war inevitable). All this showed a serious lack of judgment. Both the British and we knew through our intelligence networks that Hitler was preparing to attack Russia; and we repeatedly communicated this information to Stalin in precise detail, including the actual date of the attack. But then, Stalin refused to believe his own agents too, some of whose warnings (Richard Sorge's above all others) had been just as categorical.

But once Stalin had overcome the shock of invasion (I was not there, but I accept the story that he had fallen into a mental collapse and cut himself off from his closest associates), he moved fast and vigorously to assert his leadership. It was amazing that after the great losses he had taken he was able to redevelop his armed forces, move his industrial production to the East, restore morale and eventually defeat the Germans.

I must also give credit to Stalin as military leader. He attacked only when he had accumulated the necessary reserves to break through the German lines, but then he was prepared to take enormous losses in order to achieve a decisive victory. My military friends tell me that although these losses were quite shocking, they were smaller than they would have been if Stalin had repeatedly attacked with smaller forces and less resolution. So I'd like to emphasise my great admiration for Stalin the national leader in an emergency—one of the historic occasions where one man made so much difference. This in no sense minimises my revulsion against his cruelties; but I have to give you the constructive side as well as the other.

Let's be fair to Stalin and add in parenthesis that when the War was over he acknowledged his early blunders. On 24 May 1945, at a victory celebration in the Kremlin, Stalin said:

> "Our government made not a few errors, we experienced at moments a desperate situation in 1941–1942, when our army was retreating, because there was no other way out. A different people could have said to the government: 'You have failed to justify our expectations. Go away. We shall install another government which will conclude peace with Germany. . . .' The Russian people, however did not take this path. . . ."

These were not the words of a man whose head had been turned by victory.

—One should perhaps add for the record that Stalin's unpreparedness for the German attack may well have had its roots in his ambivalent psychological attitude to Germany and the Nazi system.

> *"If there is one nation to which we are attracted—to the whole people or at least to a majority—they are the Germans."*

Stalin said this to Emil Ludwig. And, responding to Ribbentrop's congratulatory wire on his 60th birthday in December 1939, Stalin said: "The friendship of the peoples of Germany and the Soviet Union, cemented in blood, has every reason to be lasting and firm"—words that will be quoted against him as long as history is written.

This may have been no more than a rhetorical flourish to cover a holding operation and gain time, as Soviet historians would like us to believe; but, equally, it may have expressed Stalin's genuine conviction that he could (to put it no higher) stay out of the War. Indeed, we have it on the authority of Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, that "even after the War he was in the habit of repeating, 'Ech, *together with the Germans we would have been invincible.'. . ."*[2]

HARRIMAN: I was not there—your comment is as good as mine.

OUR MOST FAMOUS *character portrait of Stalin comes from Trotsky. This is the image of Stalin as a bureaucrat: not a man who fought his way to power*

[2] On 23 August 1940, as the Battle of Britain was beginning in earnest, *Pravda* reminded its readers that the day coincided with the first anniversary of the Soviet-German Pact:

> "The signing of the Pact put an end to the enmity between Germany and the USSR, an enmity which had been artificially worked up by the warmongers. . . . After the disintegration of the Polish state, Germany proposed to Britain and France the termination of the war—a proposal which was supported by the Soviet Government. But they would not listen, and the war continued, bringing hardships and suffering to all the nations whom the organisers of the war had dragged into the bloodbath. . . . We are neutral, and this Pact has made things easier for us; it has also been of great advantage to Germany, since she can be completely confident of peace on her Eastern borders."

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through revolutionary activity of his own, as Mussolini and Hitler did, but one who manipulated his way to power using the post-revolutionary bureaucratisation of Soviet life as his escalator—a creature of the machine and symbol of Thermidor.

Did this "bureaucratic" side of Stalin come across in your talks with him (and, of course, "bureaucratic" for Trotsky meant the betrayal of the revolution)?

HARRIMAN: It is a travesty of the facts to call Stalin a mere bureaucrat. He had an enormous ability to absorb detail and to act on detail. He was very much alert to the needs of his whole war machine. He had his finger on the pulse of the country. He was not just sitting in the Kremlin glorying in his power.

In our negotiations with him we usually found him extremely well informed. He had a masterly knowledge of the sort of equipment that was important for him. He knew the calibre of the guns he wanted, the weight of the tanks his roads and bridges would take, and the details of the type of metal he needed to build aircraft. These were not characteristics of a bureaucrat, but rather those of an extremely able and vigorous war leader. Trotsky's prejudice against Stalin was as strong as Stalin's against Trotsky.

—Wasn't your confidence in Stalin's competence as a War Leader a little shattered when you heard Stalin remark to you: "In the Soviet Army it takes more courage to retreat than to advance"? Was this not a clear pointer that the Russian people's willingness to fight was not self-evident and that terrible things must have been going on behind the Soviet lines?

Or did Stalin's toughness and realism perhaps give you additional reasons for trusting his leadership?

HARRIMAN: This remark of Stalin's shows that he was fully conscious of the realities prevailing in the Red Army. We knew that Stalin had his security agents behind the lines ready to shoot down their own troops if they turned and retreated. We were appalled by this, but we realised that it did make the Red Army fight. That was the thing that mattered.

—But wasn't Stalin's remark a very damaging confession about the morale of his forces?

HARRIMAN: It was not a question of morale—he wanted them to do the impossible; he was determined to give his attack that extra punch which could be done with no other means. Our military people, who consulted the Germans after the War, told me: the devastating thing about a Russian offensive was its mass character. The Russians came in wave after wave. They would all be mown down by the Germans until, by the force of sheer attrition, one wave would eventually break through and achieve the Russian objectives. Now, there is a theory in military tactics which says that you should take your big losses right away, this being, in the last analysis, a better way of economising on your manpower than any other method. I am not qualified to judge it; but this is the theory on which the Russians worked. It was not for us to question it or the manner in which Stalin enforced it.

—Did you find Stalin a man of keen intelligence?

HARRIMAN: Oh, very. He was a man of simple purposes ready to use devious means to attain them, but these he would use doggedly and intelligently.

—Boris Bazhanov, Stalin's secretary in the mid-1920s, described Stalin as a man of poor education, incapable of producing "an orderly train of thought in speech or writing" and with a very short attention-span. Would you agree with his judgment?

HARRIMAN: No—Stalin was certainly not like that in the 1940s. I would, however, not put him down as deeply intellectual. I do not think he spent much time in trying to figure out things philosophically. He was not the creative genius that Lenin was. He was an operator. He accepted Communist ideology as he had received it from Lenin and built on that. He inherited a situation and took control of it. He was a practical man who knew how to use the levers of power, but he was no innovator or ideologue.

—Did you find Stalin a "silent" man? Bazhanov stresses Stalin's inclination to listen, wait for the consensus of his colleagues to emerge, and then come up with their conclusions as though they were his own. Emil Ludwig says:

> *"He is the most silent man I ever saw, silent until he suddenly rises to attack you. This silence, this slowness, show him an Asiatic."*

HARRIMAN: Stalin was no chatterbox. He was "Asiatic" perhaps in the sense that he was inscrutable, even enigmatic. He would not often look you in the eye. The contradiction between his personal courtesy and his wholesale liquidations always puzzled me.

PRACTICALLY EVERYONE *who had to deal with Stalin agrees that he was extremely suspicious, even paranoid. Khrushchev quotes Stalin as saying: "I trust no one, not even myself."*

HARRIMAN: I have no reason to doubt that Stalin did say that to Khrushchev. He never made a similar statement in my presence, but there is nothing that I know about Stalin which would have made it impossible for him to say it. He would say almost anything to make a point, even indulge in a bit of self-mockery. He was not at all pompous. He was in no sense holding himself up as someone hard to approach. He was very blunt, and he did not resent bluntness in return—which he certainly

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got from me when the situation so required.

—Professor Robert C. Tucker, in his penetrating analysis of Stalin's character, sums up Khrushchev's indictment of Stalin as abuse of power, and Stalin's mental state as one of paranoia. You were at the receiving end of Stalin's mistrust of his friends and allies, as for example his refusal to grant landing rights to US planes to supply the Poles in the Warsaw Uprising; his reluctance to allow the American military to locate US prisoners in the liberated areas; and countless other displays of Stalin's suspicious nature. Would you agree that he suffered from some form of persecution mania?

HARRIMAN: He was certainly very suspicious. One of Roosevelt's instructions to me was to "talk him out of his shell", away from his aloofness and secretiveness, which takes us back to September 1941 when Beaverbrook and I, representing Churchill and Roosevelt, went to Moscow to ascertain Stalin's needs and offer whatever help we could. On the second day of our talks, on 29 September 1941, we ran into rough weather. Stalin was most dissatisfied with what we had to offer and questioned our good faith, which upset Beaverbrook more than it upset me. Stalin expressed the view that we wanted to see his régime destroyed—otherwise we would have offered more assistance. "The paucity of your offers clearly shows", he said, "that you want to see the Soviet Union defeated." Whether this was just a tactical move to smoke us out and make us increase our offer, I do not know; but the fact that he said what he did reflected his deep distrust.

—There was an even graver display of Stalin's misgivings later in the war when General Karl Wolff, a senior SS-commander in Italy, attempted to make contact with the Anglo-American Command to negotiate the surrender of German forces in Italy.

HARRIMAN: Yes, known as the "Berne Incident", this really showed Stalin's mistrust of his allies in an ugly light. To cut a long story short: Stalin was gripped by the bitter suspicion that the US and Britain were negotiating to accept without Soviet participation the surrender, not only of German forces facing them on the Italian front, but of Germany as a whole. Despite Roosevelt's repeated and painstaking assurances to the contrary, Stalin in fact accused the Western Allies of betraying the Alliance. In his note of 3 April 1945, he told Roosevelt that he, Stalin, had reliable information that Marshal Kesselring had agreed to open the Western front and permit the Anglo-American troops to advance to the heart of Germany and then to the East.[3]

There was, of course, absolutely no truth in this. In any case, nothing ever came of General Wolff's suggested negotiations; but the incident did show up Stalin's morbidly suspicious nature.

Roosevelt was furious. Having trusted Stalin, he expected Stalin's trust in return. He now saw himself accused as a traitor to the Alliance, a liar and a dupe. He gave Stalin as good as he got, telling him of his "bitter resentment" for the "vile misrepresentations" of his [Roosevelt's] actions.[4]

DIDN'T ROOSEVELT'S HOPE *to have his "trust returned betray a less than adequate knowledge of what constitutes "morality" for a Marxist-Leninist?*

HARRIMAN: The incident was a rather devastating display of Stalin's suspicious nature and had little to do with the actual facts of the suggested negotiations, but it went a lot deeper than that. Stalin, like other Soviet leaders, believed in the ultimate inevitability of a confrontation between the Soviet system and "capitalist imperialism." He did not trust us, and he could not believe that we would deal with him fairly.

Stalin's cable to Roosevelt was the most insulting I had seen. The President was deeply offended. It made him suddenly realise what the post-War world was going to be like. Yet, as always in dealing with Stalin, he left the door open.

—Was Stalin's mistrust reciprocated? Did you feel at any time that Stalin might come to terms with Hitler, or accept a German surrender from other German leaders behind the backs of Britain and the US?

HARRIMAN: No, I never had any basis for suspicion that Stalin would not fight it out to the end. I do not think that was possible. Too much bitterness

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[3] "You insist that there have been no negotiations yet. It may be assumed that you have not been fully informed.

As regards my military colleagues, they, on the basis of data which they have on hand, do not have any doubts that the negotiations have taken place and that they have ended in an agreement with the Germans, on the basis of which the German commander on the Western front, Marshal Kesselring, has agreed to open the front and permit the Anglo-American troops to advance to the East and the Anglo-Americans have promised in return to ease for the Germans the peace terms. . . .

I understand that there are certain advantages for the Anglo-American troops as a result of these separate negotiations in Berne or in some other place, since the Anglo-American troops get the possibility to advance into the heart of Germany, almost without any resistance on the part of the Germans, but why was it necessary to conceal this from the Russians. . . ?"

Stalin to Roosevelt,
Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers (1945, vol. III, p. 742

[4] ". . . It would be one of the great tragedies of history if at the very moment of the victory, now within our grasp, such distrust, such lack of faith, should prejudice the entire undertaking after the colossal losses of life, material and treasure involved.

Frankly, I cannot avoid a feeling of bitter resentment towards your informers, whoever they are, for such vile misrepresentations of my actions or those of my trusted subordinates."

Foreign Relations, vol. III, p. 746

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had accumulated between the Russians and Nazi Germany—too many terrible things had happened. Some Pentagon generals, however, feared that if America got too tough with the Russians, Stalin might break up the Alliance and make a separate peace with Hitler. But, as I say, I was convinced that a second Stalin-Hitler pact was not on the cards.

—Hitler himself, in his final months in the Berlin bunker, certainly thought that he could come to terms with Stalin more easily than with the Western Allies. His argument was—and this was not unreasonable—that Stalin could turn the tide by the stroke of a pen, whereas Roosevelt and Churchill were prisoners of democratic public opinion and could therefore not change course as swiftly.

HARRIMAN: If Hitler thought that Stalin could be turned, he was certainly wrong.

—He was; but doesn't his reasoning tell us something about the kinship of dictators—even when they find themselves in mortal combat with each other? We have quite a bit of evidence that Roosevelt, and Churchill too, felt, at least in 1942, that the affinity between the two totalitarian systems, and Stalin's terrible losses in 1941–42, might persuade Stalin to seek a separate understanding with Hitler, as he had done in 1939.

HARRIMAN: This is a matter for speculation.

OUR MOST TELLING EVIDENCE *of Stalin's morbid mistrust of his Allies comes from Charles Bohlen, Roosevelt's wartime interpreter (and later US Ambassador to Moscow). He recalls "a rather acrimonious accusation by Stalin, at one of the dinners, that Churchill had secret sympathies with the Germans. . . ."*

Bohlen ascribes Stalin's outburst to his irritation at the postponement of the Second Front and Churchill's refusal to set a definite date for the invasion. If so, doesn't this show Stalin at his most arrogant (or purposely provocative)? For it was Britain that fought Germany single-handed after the fall of France, while Stalin was enjoying the benefits of his Pact with Hitler. Indeed, as you show in your memoirs, when, in the late summer of 1941, Churchill received Stalin's first demand for a Second Front, he was moved to tell the Soviet Ambassador in London:

> *"Remember that only four months ago we in this Island did not know whether you were not coming in against us on the German side. Indeed we thought it quite likely that you would. You of all people have no right to make reproaches to us."*

HARRIMAN: I was in Moscow with Churchill when the words Bohlen cites must have been spoken. I have no recollection of them, but it is quite possible that Stalin made the remark on some occasion when I was not present. Stalin would use shock-tactics as well as flattery if he felt that either could further his purpose.

—Professor Tucker, to return to him for a moment, quotes in corroboration of his view of Stalin's paranoia the testimony of such friendly witnesses as Stalin's daughter, Svetlana, who uses the words "persecution mania" to describe her father's condition. Did you see any sign of this in Stalin's behaviour?

HARRIMAN: No, I don't think Stalin was paranoid—nothing, at least, that I could observe during our negotiations and personal talks led me to believe that he was.

The remarks he made to Churchill were probably intended to annoy the British leader, to draw him out and get him to come up with a better offer. Stalin made a habit of being somewhat rude to Churchill in front of Roosevelt too, as for example at the Yalta conference. He never took liberties with Roosevelt. Of course, Churchill was a master of the pen and the word, and knew how to fend for himself. Stalin's accusations of British disloyalty on the second night of our 1942 Moscow talks induced Churchill (as I have already said) to make one of the most extraordinary speeches I have ever heard. With great composure, very quietly, and without losing his temper, Churchill told Stalin what Britain had done during the War and completely refuted Stalin's accusations. I was really surprised that Churchill preserved his calm so well, seeing the criticism Stalin had hurled at him. It was a masterly performance by a great statesman and orator.

—Much has been written about Stalin's behaviour at dinner and after dinner, both on formal occasions with foreign statesmen such as yourself, Roosevelt and Churchill, and among his Communist cronies. Were these enjoyable occasions?

HARRIMAN: "Enjoyable" is not quite the word that would come to my mind. I would say they were fascinating experiences. Stalin took tremendous

"Now for some teamwork, Joe."
Low on the Churchill-Harriman mission (1942)

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interest in these formal banquets. He was very conscious of protocol. He showed concern for everybody. He went round the room at different times, toasting everyone involved in any kind of official activity. No one was ignored. He made these dinners very lively—he brought everybody in.

—Stalin's parties were known for their inordinate length, the amount of alcohol consumed, and their rather earthy baiting and bantering. Did you ever see Stalin not fully in control of himself? Khrushchev in his The Last Testament *speaks of one such occasion: "... soon he [Stalin] was so drunk that he didn't even know who this Petru Groza was any more." Svetlana, too, records: "One day ... my father did have too much to drink and sang folksongs with Smirnov, the Minister of Health."*

HARRIMAN: No, I never saw Stalin out of control; but, then, the accounts you are hinting at refer to Stalin's rather more intimate sessions with his comrades and foreign Communists. It was there that Khrushchev was made to dance a Ukrainian dance, and Beria disgraced himself on a variety of occasions. Molotov, too, was rather fond of taking a little more than was good for him. I never saw Stalin less than fully in control of himself. When I sat next to him at dinner I noticed that he would drink one glass of pepper vodka; but the rest of the toasts were drunk in white wine in very small glasses so that during the course of a long evening he consumed very little. Stalin was very careful in his relations with other people. He kept a watchful eye on them. I can well imagine that if he was suspicious of someone he would try to get him drunk to see how he behaved. But, as I say, he would never put himself in a position where he was not master of the situation.

—Milovan Djilas feels that the desperate indulgence of the cabal around Stalin in drink and bravado was an expression of the conspiratorial nature of the Soviet Leadership. They drank and talked to excess because they were unsure of their legitimacy. Would you agree with that?

HARRIMAN: I was not there, hence it is not my business to say whether he is right or wrong. I always found Stalin controlled and self-confident.

—You spoke of Stalin's great sense of realism. I wonder how this accords with Djilas's account of an after-dinner film-show he attended in Stalin's company. "Throughout the performance", Djilas reports, "Stalin made comments—reactions to what was going on, in the manner of uneducated men who mistake artistic reality for actuality." Did Stalin behave in a like manner during the film-shows you attended?

HARRIMAN: No, I never saw him behave like that. Stalin had a great liking for the Viennese type of operettas and waltzes and certain American musicals written in that style. I saw him enjoying those. But I never saw him egg on a film's hero or berate the villain. I take Djilas's account with a grain of salt. I find it hard to reconcile with Stalin's realism.

—Would you say that Stalin was a formative influence in your political career? Would your life-experience be poorer and thinner if you had not met Stalin and not worked with him?

HARRIMAN: I never thought of Stalin in that framework. I have had so many fascinating experiences in my life that I would only say that my dealings with Stalin were among many *other* fascinating ones.

—Not **the** *outstanding experience in the sense of adding some new dimension to your knowledge of human affairs?*

HARRIMAN: No, I would not say so. My relationship with Roosevelt was much more important and more interesting.

"HISTORY DOES NOT KNOW *a despot as brutal and as cynical as Stalin was", Djilas writes in* Conversations with Stalin. *"He was all-embracing, and total as a criminal. He was one of those rare and terrible dogmatists capable of destroying nine-tenths of the human race to 'make happy' the remaining tenth."*

I would have thought that working with a man like that would be a memorable and rather mind-expanding occasion even though the "monster" in Stalin (to use Djilas's word) was carefully hidden from the eyes of foreign visitors.

HARRIMAN: It was, of course, memorable to work with Stalin, but it was not an experience I would hold up as unique and put way above the others. I had to deal with Stalin as head of the Russian government. He was important to us and we were important to him. I was not interested in the psychology of his character, the secret of his rule, or any of the other philosophical matters that exercise your curiosity. I would summarise my relationship with Stalin in a single phrase: a contest of wills. That was all.

—Have you ever puzzled over Stalin's doodlings? Beaverbrook reports that Stalin was in the habit of drawing pictures of wolves and filling in the background in red pencil. Emil Ludwig also saw him draw images in red pencil but never using the blue end.[5] Would you have an explanation for his doodlings?

HARRIMAN: Stalin was a doodler—that's all. He did it all the time. I did not pay as much attention to this as Beaverbrook did. He was more curious

[5] He seemed to use the red end of his pencil to give free rein to his imagination as a man of power, and *did* in fact use the blue end, for settling administrative detail—for example, in approving Churchill's 1944 "spheres of influence" paper.

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about that sort of thing than I was. I don't know why people doodle. Psychologists claim to have explanations. I don't. Have you?

—I would hazard that Stalin's wolves were the "enemy" about to be consumed by the red fire of Soviet power and revolution.

HARRIMAN: It is too much of a guess. I would not want to speculate.

III. The Second Front & Eastern Europe

HINDSIGHT, as you rightly say, is a treacherous perspective, yet I find it difficult to resist asking you: If Churchill and Roosevelt had known in 1942 or 1943 what they were to know in 1945, would they not have done well to pick up Stalin's urgent appeals for a Second Front and launch the invasion of Europe in 1943 rather than 1944? This would have changed the entire post-War map of Europe, admittedly at some cost to the Western allies, but also to their immense advantage in terms of the post-War world balance of power. One can say with as much certainty as anything is certain in history that an invasion in 1943 would have seen the whole of Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia liberated by the Anglo-American forces.

My question, then, is: Was the postponement of the Second Front, first from 1942 to 1943 and then to 1944, really inevitable, and did Roosevelt and Churchill have a realistic appreciation of the price they would have to pay for the delays?

HARRIMAN: The story of this harassed chapter of Anglo-American-Soviet relations is well known; so I will restrict myself to saying that in 1942 we were militarily unprepared to go in. The Russians had some legitimate grounds for complaint because a statement approved by President Roosevelt at the time of Molotov's visit to Washington in June 1942 did speak of the "urgent tasks of creating a Second Front in Europe in 1942", even though Churchill was more cautious and refused on his part to promise that a Second Front would, in fact, be launched that year.

Plans were being made for major action in Europe in 1943, but this would have meant building up large US forces in Britain over a long period of time and keeping them inactive until all was ready for the actual invasion. Moreover, Churchill and the British generals were unenthusiastic. Their troops and equipment were inadequate, and Churchill had a predilection for not striking at the heart of Europe at that particular time, but rather going round it via North Africa, Italy and the Balkans. Roosevelt's great worry was that if large American forces remained idle in the United Kingdom he would find it impossible to fend off demands inside the US for a Pacific-First strategy. That was the reason why Churchill's plan for a North African operation as a substitute had a great appeal for Roosevelt and was eventually accepted, even though our Chiefs of Staff were unenthusiastic about it.

For all these reasons, and in the teeth of Stalin's bitter charges that the Western Allies were not pulling their weight and were too cowardly to tangle with the Germans, the Second Front could not be launched until June 1944. Even then, Churchill and his generals were worried and diffident. I saw Churchill a month before the invasion and found him, even at that late hour, torn by doubt. He was deeply worried about the disaster that might flow from the operation if the landings should fail. He told me that if the Anglo-American forces were pushed back into the sea, the Americans would have lost a battle but the British would have incurred the loss of their whole military capability.

I don't like to indulge in the might-have-beens of history. Roosevelt was convinced that it was in our national interests to defeat Hitler first and not to enter into premature speculation as to whether the Soviets might outflank us in a post-War settlement, or we them. People who now tell us that we ought to have had more foresight and pre-empted this or that Soviet move are wise after the event. They don't realise the political pressures of the time.

—Nevertheless, looking back from the comfortable position we are now in and permitting ourselves the luxury of some speculation, would you not agree that if Roosevelt had been strong enough to fend off the Pacific-Firsters, the invasion might have been successfully launched in 1943 despite British military weakness and British hesitation? In which case the Russians would never have reached Berlin or perhaps even got as far West as Warsaw?

HARRIMAN: General Marshall put all the heat he possibly could on the British, but he did not realise just how weak the British were. They had some 28 divisions, none of them fully equipped, some of them only 25% up to strength. They were paper divisions. It would have been a disaster to go ashore with them. We had difficulty enough achieving what we did in 1944—remember the Germans' Ardennes offensive. In 1943 it was militarily just not possible to launch the Second Front with any prospect of success.

Macmillan made a speech the other day in which he, too, said that we should have gone into Germany from the South much earlier in the War, taken Vienna and advanced from there to the heart of Germany. All sorts of people are now telling us how we should have fought the War. I'm not going to indulge in any second-guessing. My obligation to history is to record what happened and why, and not to speculate what might have been a better course of action seen with the wisdom of hindsight.

—Isn't it rather ironic, though, that Stalin was pressing

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so hard and with such bitterness for the Second Front from 1941 all the way to 1944! If Britain and the US had been able and willing to do what he was asking, an early Second Front would have boomeranged back on his own expansionist ambitions. I do, of course, realise, that Stalin was under extreme military pressure and had no choice but to ask for military assistance from any quarter he could get it.

HARRIMAN: Precisely. After Hitler's attack had taken him by complete surprise, Stalin lost a large part of his armies, many of his best generals and officers. He was facing disaster, hence he was most anxious to have some of the pressure taken off his forces. That is why he was so doggedly pleading for a Second Front. The prospect of victory was very distant, and any post-War jockeying for advantage in Europe was more distant still. The first priority was to avoid defeat. That explains Stalin's insistence.

WHEN GENERAL EISENHOWER reached some 120 miles into what was to become the Soviet Zone of Occupation, Churchill urged President Truman that the Western Allies should make the withdrawal of Eisenhower's forces conditional on correct Soviet behaviour in Central and Eastern Europe. He wanted the Americans to stand pat on the Elbe and thus force Stalin to live up to his Yalta obligations. On the advice of the US State and War Departments, however, Churchill's suggestion was turned down by President Truman. Do you feel that this was the right decision?

HARRIMAN: I had nothing to do with that decision. I was always for maximum pressure on the Soviets. I thought, however, that Churchill's suggestion was not very practical because agreements made under duress generally do not hold. It is hard enough to get an agreement with the Soviets that is freely entered into and make it stick! Also, acceptance of Churchill's idea would have landed us with clear responsibility for the Cold War without ultimately changing things much in Eastern Europe; for in the last analysis there was nothing we could have done to prevent unilateral Soviet action in Eastern Europe short of going to war with the Russians. Some American officers and some of the French were talking of doing just that, but I do not think that American public opinion would have stood for it. The mood in America was one of solidarity with the Soviet Union, and there was a war to be won with Japan.

—But would it not have been in line with your own thinking for the Anglo-American forces to penetrate as far to the East as they could and force Stalin's hand from a position of strength—force him, that is, to respect the Yalta agreement? We learn from your memoirs that in April 1945, in your talks with the Pentagon and State Department, you expounded the view that

> *"Stalin's insistence upon a belt of weak, easily dominated neighbouring states was not limited to Eastern Europe. Once the Soviet Union had control of the bordering areas . . . it would probably attempt to penetrate the next layer of adjacent countries. [I] saw no virtue in waiting; the issue was best fought out as far to the East as possible."*

HARRIMAN: I felt at the time that we ought to have taken Berlin, which was well within our grasp. Hanging on to 120 miles of German territory, however, did not seem to me anything as exciting. Berlin would have been something tangible and well worth holding, and I do regret that we did not take it. But remember that we were bound by the agreement we had made with the Russians about the division of Germany into national zones of occupation, and the rationale of that agreement was not so much to parcel out German territory as to avoid any fighting between the Soviet and Western Allied forces. For all these reasons, and also because he overestimated the strength of German resistance further south, Eisenhower held back and then withdrew to the zonal boundary. There was, furthermore, another important factor. If we had refused to evacuate the Soviet zone of occupation, the Soviets would most probably have retaliated in Austria by refusing to withdraw from *our* zone of occupation there, in which case Austria today would be a Soviet satellite.

More generally: you must remember that we were not looking for a fight with the Russians. We were looking for the defeat of Hitler with the minimum cost in American lives. That was what Roosevelt was trying to do, and I think history will say that he did it very well. I am, of course, interested in how we could have done better; I am interested in listening to it, but not in joining the discussion.

—But wouldn't you agree that Churchill's sombre forecast, soon to be borne out by events, could have been turned to good account if American government thinking had been informed by a more sophisticated sense of history? On 12 May 1945 Churchill wrote to Truman:

> *"An iron curtain is drawn upon their [the Russians'] front. There seems little doubt that the whole of the regions east of the line Lübeck-Trieste-Corfu will soon be completely in their hands. To this must be added the further enormous area conquered by the American armies between Eisenach and the Elbe, which will, I suppose, in a few weeks be occupied, when the Americans retreat, by the Russian power. . . ."*

HARRIMAN: Both the State Department and the Pentagon were against using the presence of American troops in the Soviet zone as a bargaining counter. Harry Hopkins advised the President that an American failure to withdraw would be violating an agreement made in good faith only a short time earlier. There was also the consideration that the Russians would not permit the Allied Control Council to function in Berlin until we evacuated the

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Soviet zone. On 11 June 1945, therefore, Truman told Churchill that he was "unable to delay the withdrawal of US troops from the Soviet zone in order to use pressure in the settlement of other problems."

Even in retrospect, I don't think we could have forced the Russians to allow freely elected governments to function in Eastern Europe if we had done what Churchill suggested. Churchill's gloomy vision was borne out by events, but the factors I have listed militated against accepting his counsel.

—Just how strongly did you feel about the suggestion you had made to the Pentagon and the State Department that the Western Allies' quarrel with the Russians should be "fought out as far to the East as possible"?

Another distinguished observer of the Soviet scene, Mr George Kennan, felt (as he tells us in his Memoirs) *that the US did not have the power to affect Soviet behaviour in Eastern Europe and that it would be a mistake for America to make a big fight over it. The US, he suggested, should not share any of the moral opprobrium for what the Russians were doing in Eastern Europe.*

HARRIMAN: My own feeling was that unless we fought it out in Eastern Europe, the Russians would be moving to the next area further West. Having given up our first line of defence, we would then have to make a stand anyway, but under conditions far less favourable.

I remember meeting Stalin at Potsdam in 1945 and congratulating him on arriving in Berlin after all the trials his country had gone through. He looked at me meaningly and said: "Czar Alexander I got to Paris!"

What I suppose he intended to convey was not, as many people now think, that he wanted his armed forces to conquer the rest of Europe, but that he felt that the Communist Parties of France and Italy were strong enough to take control of the governments there, which would then open the way for Stalin to move in.

It was precisely to counter that threat and to work out a programme for European recovery that President Truman appointed a Committee under my chairmanship. We were very active trying to prevent the expansion of Soviet power to Western Europe and, as you know, our work was not unsuccessful. A second volume of my memoirs, which is now in preparation, will give the details of this story.

—Was it not surprising in the light of the "Berne Incident", and the Nazis' justified (and one might say well-deserved) fear of the Russians that they did not open the Western front to the Anglo-American forces and permit a much larger part of Germany to be occupied than the Western Allies actually succeeded in doing?

HARRIMAN: I was, from the very beginning, not very happy about the division of Germany into zones of occupation, because I thought the Germans would fight the Russians every inch of the way but would let us in and enable us to occupy a much larger part of Germany or indeed the whole of it. They did, in fact, put up a tremendous fight against the Russians; but they fought us too.

—Why did they mount the Ardennes offensive? Was it a last desperate attempt to raise morale in Germany, or was Hitler entertaining hopes on the lines I have suggested, i.e. that he might pull off a sudden cease fire with Stalin, in which case he would want to hold off the Americans as far to the West as he could?

HARRIMAN: I don't suppose anyone in Hitler's forces had the courage to let the enemy in, no matter which enemy. The Ardennes offensive? I cannot explain it, but as I keep telling my friends, I was never hired to be a prophet. It is an interesting question, and if you have a good answer, I'd be glad if you'd let me know. In any case, in the last few weeks of the War the Germans no longer put up a great fight against us, whereas they did fight the Russians.

HITLER HOPED *and to some extent believed to the very end of the War that the Allies would fall out with each other, in which case either Stalin or the Western Allies would want to enlist the Germans on their side; and, as we know, he was anxiously examining every scrap of information that appeared to support his hopes, as well as reading and re-reading the story of Frederick the Great, who in the Seven Years War snatched victory out of the jaws of defeat by the sudden disintegration of the unity of his enemies. This is the only theory I can come up with, and it is, of course, widely held by historians. Hitler, on this showing, ordered the Ardennes offensive to gain time and raise morale in the hinterland. There was always some straw in the wind a desperate man could clutch at. If he took a large enough view, he could, for example, take some general comfort from Senator (as he then was) Truman's words: "If we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia, and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany and that way let them kill as many as possible. . . ."*

"The Scum of the Earth, I believe?"
"The Bloody Assassin of the Workers, I presume?"
(Low, 1940)

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HARRIMAN: Ah, but Truman also said that he would not want to see Hitler victorious under any circumstance! "Neither of them thinks anything of their pledged word. . . ."

—On 14 December 1944 (as you tell us in your memoirs) you saw Stalin and discussed with him Eisenhower's difficulties in reaching the Rhine before the winter set in. You asked him to acquaint you with his plans for winter operations so that Eisenhower might make his own arrangements accordingly. Stalin explained the causes of delay on the Polish front (bad weather etc.) and made the "astonishing suggestion" (already, in fact, made to Churchill in October) that five to six Allied divisions, later to be increased to eight to ten, should be landed in Northern Yugoslavia, advance on Zagreb, and eventually join up with Soviet troops on Austrian soil. You replied that this was something Churchill had been advocating for a long time, warning that an amphibious operation of this kind would take very careful preparation.

Stalin's proposal was indeed astonishing, for at the 1943 Teheran conference he had fought off Churchill's plan for just that kind of an operation as an alternative to a Second Front in France. We can only speculate about its meaning. Does it suggest to you in retrospect that as late as December 1944 Stalin was not sure whether Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia would come within his sphere of influence, and that he was prepared to settle for far less than he got in 1945? Stalin must have known that if eight to ten Western divisions drove a wedge from Zagreb to Vienna, the future of the Communist régime in Yugoslavia, and of Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia as possible satellites, would be jeopardised.

HARRIMAN: You must remember that in October–December 1944 extremely bitter fighting was still going on on all fronts. My guess would be that Stalin was anxious to get German divisions diverted from the Eastern front. If we could be persuaded to land in Dalmatia at short notice, he would get large German forces off his neck. This might admittedly have limited his penetration in the South, but it would have made it easier for him to advance rapidly in the North and take a great deal more of German territory than he eventually did manage to occupy. I am as certain as anybody can be that Stalin at that stage did not have a master plan to turn Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia into Communist buffer states and satellites. He did so, or attempted to do so, once his forces were there. But in December 1944 he would have been just as glad to see his way made a little less arduous in the North. Germany was, after all, a greater prize than any other part of Europe.

—There is also an alternative and rather Yugo-centric explanation which I put to Milovan Djilas in embryonic form in 1979. By the autumn of 1944 there were tensions and misunderstandings between Tito and Stalin. Stalin would not allow that a "Communist" revolution was taking place in Yugoslavia; he was gravely suspicious that Tito might puncture his monopoly. Moreover, Stalin went on recognising and maintaining diplomatic relations with the Yugoslav monarchy, which was anathema to Tito. Stalin's initiative for an Anglo-American landing in Yugoslavia was, according to this theory, a veiled threat to Tito: If you don't toe the Moscow line you will come under Anglo-American occupation and that will be the end of your régime. (Tito, we must remember, was extremely hostile to the Western Allies and especially apprehensive about a British landing in Dalmatia.)

Would this make sense to you?

HARRIMAN: What was Djilas's reaction?

—"Possibly so", he said rather laconically, but said no more.

HARRIMAN: I would not even go as far as that. It is, to my mind, unlikely that Stalin would have suggested so big an operation with such unforeseeable consequences just to threaten Tito. I am, of course, in no position to analyse fully the Yugoslav point of view, but my guess would be that Stalin was led by purely military considerations. He was anxious to reach the northern parts of Germany via Poland as rapidly as he could, and for that he needed some pressure to be taken off his central front. In any case, the landings were never made. Incidentally, I don't know Djilas. I always wanted to meet him because I'd like to see into the mind of a man who, having been an avid Communist, then decided that Communism was not for him. I once asked Tito (after Djilas's second imprisonment, if I remember correctly) whether I could meet Djilas, but he said "Better not. . . ."

IV. Czar & Commissar

YOU HAVE POINTED OUT *repeatedly in this conversation that your job in Moscow was to keep the Russians fighting and save American lives. This may have been an entirely justified policy in terms of American national interest, but it did make the Soviet Union bear the brunt of the War both in material devastation and human sacrifice. Soviet losses in dead alone were about twenty times those of the US and the British Empire combined.*

My impression is that some of the US indulgence shown towards Soviet expansionism in the final phases of the War and for a short time after the War was due to a tacit American recognition that the Russians had done most of the bleeding and taken most of the punishment. In other words: the American public was, perhaps only subconsciously, burdened with a feeling of a "debt unpaid" which it was anxious to pay off in some form.

The Soviets, of course, have never stopped claiming in their propaganda that they won the War either single-handed or with minimal assistance from the Allies. Indeed, during the War, it was already (in the words of Deutscher) Stalin's "stock argument that the place any nation was to be allowed to keep in peace should be proportionate to the strength it had shown and the sacrifices it had borne during the War. . . ." Accordingly, Stalin never permitted the Soviet public to be informed of

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Lend-Lease; and he kept it in the dark about the Anglo-American bombing of Germany and the magnitude of the American and British War effort.

I should imagine it was not difficult for you and your colleagues in Moscow to infer that every time Stalin launched one of his bitter recriminations against the Anglo-American side for being too slow and too much afraid to take on the Germans, he was building up credit for himself as head of a country which was bearing most of the sacrifices and thereby earning the right to present the bill at the appropriate time?

HARRIMAN: I was not conscious that American public opinion did show such indulgence towards the Russians. Apart from occasional visits to the States, I was in Europe throughout the War, so I cannot speak from experience; but I was not conscious of it at all.

Now, Stalin never reprimanded us for not pulling our weight in the War. I would have answered him if he had; I would have given him a very strong reply. The Soviets would not have survived if we had not helped them, and on at least one occasion Stalin himself acknowledged his debt. Speaking in Churchill's presence in the British Embassy in October 1944, Stalin said that there was a time when Great Britain and Russia between them could handle the affairs of Europe. Together they had fought the Germans in World War I; but in World War II, Britain and Russia could not have prevailed over Germany. He doubted, Stalin said, whether Germany could have been defeated without the full weight of the United States on the side of the Allies.

STALIN SAID *Germany could not have been* **defeated** *without American help. Is this quite the same as saying that Russia could not have* **survived** *without American assistance?*

HARRIMAN: If we had not sent them the massive supplies we did, the Russians could not have survived. When I say "survive", they would perhaps not have been thoroughly conquered, but they *would* have been pushed back to the Urals and probably beyond. We supplied them with an enormous amount of war materials—worth about twelve billion dollars at Wartime prices.

—We have already spoken of your inability, in 1944, to convince Roosevelt of "the importance of a vigilant, firm policy in dealing with the political aspects in various Eastern European countries." Would it be too wild a conjecture that Roosevelt's attitude was at least coloured by the indulgence which (in my assumption) American public opinion and much of the American political class showed towards the Soviet Union at that particular time?

HARRIMAN: I think it would. America was suffering from no guilt complex *vis-à-vis* the Russians. President Roosevelt just did not have a very good understanding of the problems of Eastern Europe; and he realised, as the Russians were moving deeper and deeper into Eastern Europe, that he would be powerless to exert any real influence there.

—What was the President's reaction to the division of Eastern Europe into spheres of influence on a by now extremely famous piece of paper on which Churchill wrote down the percentages? The story as told by Churchill is well known:

> *"The moment was apt for business, so I said: 'Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Bulgaria and Rumania. We have interests, missions and agents there. Don't let us get at cross purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety percent predominance in Rumania, for us to have ninety percent of the say in Greece, and go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?' "*

While his words were being put into Russian, Churchill wrote down these percentages on a piece of paper, adding a 50–50 division for Hungary and giving the Kremlin a 75–25 predominance in Bulgaria.

> *"I pushed this across to Stalin. . . . There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us. It was all settled in no more time than it takes to set down. . . .*
>
> *"After this there was a long silence. The pencilled paper lay in the centre of the table. At length I said, 'Might it not be thought rather cynical if it seemed we had disposed of these issues, so fateful to millions of people, in such an offhand manner? Let us burn the paper.' 'No, you keep it', said Stalin."*

HARRIMAN: I never took this thing seriously, and I don't think it was important as it did not affect the future. Stalin, as we know, ignored it even though Churchill always claimed that Stalin respected the Greek side of the bargain in the sense that the Greek Communists received their aid from Yugoslavia, not Russia. This so-called agreement was one of those rather spectacular non-events that historians tend to pick up and make much of. The United States was not party to the bargain. Indeed Roosevelt dissociated himself in *advance* from any understanding Churchill might reach with Stalin during their Moscow talks in October 1944.

You see, Churchill was anxious to have a *tête-à-tête* with Stalin on two principal topics: Russian participation in the war against Japan and the future of Eastern Europe. He wanted to have full American participation, which Roosevelt, however, refused. Indeed he sent a message to Stalin through myself, making it absolutely clear that Churchill was not authorised to speak for the United States.

"I am firmly convinced", Roosevelt wrote, "that the three of us, and only the three of us, can find the solution of the questions still unresolved. In this sense, while appreciating Mr Churchill's desire for the meeting, I prefer to regard your forthcoming talks with the Prime Minister as preliminary to a meeting of the three of us. . . . Mr Harriman

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naturally will not be in a position to commit this Government in respect to the important matters which very naturally will be discussed by you and Mr Churchill." Churchill was, of course, disappointed that Roosevelt declined to authorise American participation, and Stalin, too, expressed his embarrassment. He expected that Churchill was coming to Moscow on the strength of agreements reached at the Quebec conference and thus fully authorised to speak for the US too. But this was not so. When Churchill put his spheres-of-influence ideas on the table I was not even present. I was informed about it by Churchill several days after the event, even though (quite mistakenly) Churchill in his book lists me as one of the participants.

—But once the spheres-of-influence agreement (if that is what it was) had been reached, Roosevelt did not disown it.

HARRIMAN: He knew nothing about it and had nothing to do with it. He had (as I say) disowned everything Churchill said or agreed to *before* Churchill undertook his trip to Moscow. He made it very plain to Churchill and very plain to me that he didn't want Churchill to go and see Stalin in the first place, and then that he would not be bound in any way by anything Churchill told Stalin or agreed with Stalin. It never crossed Roosevelt's mind that Churchill would come up with a spheres-of-influence proposal.

In any case, I did not take this so-called agreement seriously, and if I did not take it seriously at the time it could not have been very serious, because I was there on the spot, quite able to judge what was important and what was not.

—Did the spheres-of-influence agreement have any impact on your work in 1945 in Rumania as member of the Harriman-Clark Kerr-Vishinsky Commission?

HARRIMAN: None whatever. The Russians, of course, imposed their government on King Michael in any case, despite our repeated protests, but Churchill's agreement with Stalin never came up as a point of reference. We insisted on completely free elections as agreed at Yalta, under the Atlantic Charter and in the Rumanian Armistice Agreement, but the spheres-of-influence agreement just did not come into the picture. Even the Russians made no reference to it although they might have quoted it in their favour as Churchill had given them a 90% interest in Rumania. In a message to Churchill of 11 March 1945 Roosevelt said that he was determined not to let the Yalta decisions slip through his fingers in Rumania; and he commented with some bitterness that the Russians had installed a minority government of their own choosing. He refrained, however, from so much as mentioning the Churchill-Stalin understanding. So much for the importance of that famous piece of paper.

—Historians are divided on the question whether Russian national interest or Communist ideology was the motor behind Stalin's expansionism and indeed whether one or the other is the motor behind the expansionism of Stalin's successors. Without necessarily assuming that the choice has to be "either/or", let me ask you whether you thought Stalin was exploiting the patriotism of the Russian people in order to advance world revolution, or whether, on the contrary, he was using Communist ideology to advance Russian national, not to say imperial, interests?

HARRIMAN: Stalin and the Soviet government had and have both objectives. The expansion of Russia as a national state promotes, in their eyes, the triumph of Communism, and the advance of Communism serves old-fashioned, Czarist, imperial ends. Whether the first or the second took precedence in the mind of Stalin I was not able to judge. He was certainly convinced that the Soviet type of system was the one which the whole of mankind was sooner or later destined to adopt and that it was his responsibility to put maximum pressure on whomever or whatever stood in the way. I doubt whether he or his colleagues ever stopped to ask themselves which of the two was their principal motivation, and I doubt whether anyone in the present Soviet leadership does.

Yet Stalin was a cautious revolutionary and a cautious imperialist. He believed in the inevitability of world revolution, but he was not prepared to endanger the Soviet state by pushing the revolution too far to the West. Poland, however, was a different matter for him. This was the traditional invasion route for both Napoleon and Hitler. He was determined to keep control of it.

WOULD YOU AGREE *that Stalin and his successors have been able to use the message of Communism as an excellent tool for Russian expansionism—a much more effective weapon than Orthodoxy and Panslavism with their necessarily limited appeal?*

HARRIMAN; I would not disagree with that. My own view, however, is that Bolshevism has no appeal, or should have none, because it is a reactionary development. The dictatorship of the proletariat is an historically regressive idea for it makes the individual a servant of the state, robs him of his power of decision, and is thus at odds with the aspirations of mankind. This was my view after I had first visited Russia in 1926, and I have had no reason to change it.

—How did Roosevelt see the relative importance of Russian national ambition and Communism in the mind of Stalin?

HARRIMAN: Roosevelt was a religious man. He did not think that the atheist Communist system could permanently suppress the Russian people's

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religious instincts and traditions. He thought that in time the Soviet system was bound to become more liberal.

He looked upon Stalin's international policies as a combination of traditional Russian imperialism and an ideological drive to advance world Communism. He felt that, after the War, Soviet revolutionary evangelism would slowly recede and self-interest would increasingly become the guide to Soviet policy.

—But in your personal judgment this hope has clearly not been borne out by facts, because in your book Peace with Russia? *(and the question-mark in that title already tells us something about your views) you observed in 1960 that the Soviet leaders' "plans for developing Russia for the Russians are subordinate to the main goal of world revolution. Though their methods have changed since Stalin's time, their aims remain the same. . . ."*

HARRIMAN: Yes, Roosevelt would have been disappointed. He would have been disappointed on another score too. He believed that our intimate cooperation with the Russians during the War could and should serve as a basis for post-War collaboration. He was determined to establish a close personal relationship with Stalin so that after the War the Soviet leaders would have confidence in the West. He was aware that the devastation of vast areas of Russia would call for a great effort at reconstruction, and he was prepared to offer generous American help. He was anxious to help Russia establish itself as a leading and respected member of the family of nations.

I did not disagree with Roosevelt's approach, but I was convinced that it would be far more difficult to establish a basis of confidence with Stalin than Roosevelt thought. Churchill was even more cautious. He too wanted a post-War understanding with the Kremlin, but he despised Communism and all its works and had his eye on specific political problems. He foresaw much greater political difficulties with the Soviet leaders after the War than Roosevelt did.

WHAT WERE YOUR THOUGHTS *when you first discovered that several thousand American war-prisoners, whom the Soviet forces had found in Poland, weren't treated at all well by their Soviet liberators—that the Russians could not be moved to expedite their return to the US, that American food and medical supplies were not allowed to reach them, and that in many cases their belongings had been stolen by Russian troops and their lives threatened?*

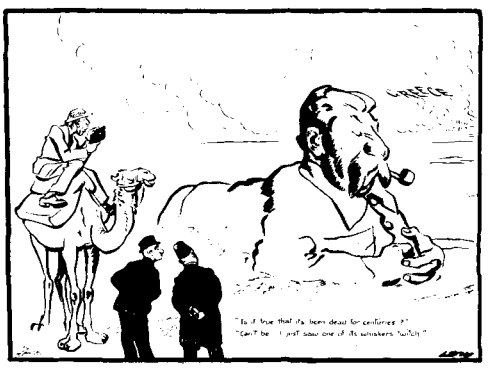
HARRIMAN: Well, of course the callousness of the Soviet attitude did not augur well for the prospects of post-War collaboration with the Russians. But I did not spend my time worrying about what would happen after the War. My job was to get our supplies to these men and to see them brought home, and I did just that. I was not really surprised that the Russians treated our men so badly. They knew no better. They treated their own people just as callously. There was a great deal of suffering on all sides.

—Did you ask yourself: If this is the way they treat their allies who have supplied them with arms, raw materials and food in their hour of need, how are they going to treat their enemies and indeed their own war-prisoners in German hands?

HARRIMAN: I had no responsibility for the prisoners they took from enemy countries. My responsibility was for and to our own people, and I could not go beyond that. I should think you realise that I was extremely busy dealing with the War. I was not going to assume responsibility for people who were no concern of mine.

—After a great deal of frustration, the Russians were eventually persuaded to sign an agreement with the US and British military representatives on the repatriation of Allied prisoners. General John R. Deane and his Soviet counterpart signed the relevant agreement shortly before Yalta. Your purpose was to get the 75,000 US servicemen located in territories overrun by the Russians back to America in the shortest possible time. But the agreement also provided for the repatriation of Soviet war-prisoners and other Soviet citizens found in territories occupied by the Western Allies. Were you aware of the implications of this agreement for millions of Russian soldiers and civilians found on German territory in May 1945?

HARRIMAN: The negotiations leading up to the agreement were exclusively the responsibility of General Deane and his British counterpart, General Burrows. They had been started some eight months before Yalta and were no part of the Yalta agreement.[6] Roosevelt never saw the document,



"Is it true it's been dead for centuries?"
"Can't be. I just saw one of its whiskers twitch."

[6] The Yalta Agreement did in fact provide for the repatriation of all Soviet citizens, saying nothing, however, about the future of those who did not want to return. Ed. Note.

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and I got to know about it much after the event. When I did get to know about it, however, I was concerned; but I knew that General Deane's primary business was to get food and medical supplies to our men and get them out. It would have been a little too much to expect us to worry about Russian prisoners-of-war on German territory.

I don't think it ever occurred to anyone on our side that these Russians would refuse to return home because they had good reason to suspect that they would be sent to their deaths or to prison camps. In any case, if we claimed (as we did) the right to our prisoners in Russian hands, we could not very well deny the Russians their right to the repatriation of their own men in Germany. We could not have demanded something for us that we were not willing to grant them.

—Did the United States Government have no information as to how Stalin was dealing with Soviet soldiers who had fallen into German captivity? With all due respect—Stalin's denunciation and the NKVD's treatment of these as "traitors" was public knowledge in Russia from the beginning of the German-Soviet war. So was the fact that when Stalin's son, Jacob, fell into German captivity and the Germans offered to exchange him, Stalin disowned his son as a traitor, and Jacob eventually died in a German war-prison.[7]

HARRIMAN: All that knowledge came later. At the time we could not be expected to prejudge the issue by assuming that the Russians would regard their prisoners-of-war as traitors and treat them as such. We could not guess that. The criticism is unjustified.

Nothing in the Soviet-Allied agreement required the US and British commanders to repatriate Soviet soldiers against their will. Unfortunately, the Russians insisted on this cruel interpretation of the agreement, and the Western Allies went along with it until about the spring of 1946, sending back hundreds of thousands of Russian men, women, and children. The US and British commanders were fearful that if these people were not forcibly repatriated, the Russians might refuse to repatriate our own men from Eastern Europe. It was a sorry business and easy to condemn in retrospect. But at the time our first concern was the fate of our own men.

—Whatever one may think of the deeds and misdeeds of Joseph Stalin, the historian's job is to acknowledge that he left his "footprints in the sands of time." Was he liked? Was he feared? Was he worshipped? Was he hated?

My personal impression is that the ordinary Russian's attitude to Stalin in his life-time is well summed up by Ilya Ehrenburg (and I quote him with some reluctance because his integrity is not unimpeachable, but then, that may be the very thing that makes him so representative):

> *"It would be too much to say that I liked Stalin, but for a long time I believed in him and I feared him. When I talked about him, I, like everybody else called him 'The Boss.' In the same way Jews in the past never pronounced the name of God . . . ."*

How would you as a distinguished American who probably saw more of Stalin than any other Western statesman, sum up your mental image of Stalin?

HARRIMAN: Soon after the death of Stalin, Khrushchev and I discussed the self-same topic. Khrushchev said: "Like Peter the Great, Stalin fought barbarism with barbarism, but he was a great man."

That, I believe, is the truth about Stalin.

[7] Svetlana Allilueva records: "To my father the fact that Jacob had become a prisoner of war was nothing but a 'disgrace' before the whole world. In the USSR the news was kept under cover both during the War and after, although the press in the rest of the world was writing about it. And when a foreign correspondent officially asked for information on the subject, my father said that '. . . in Hitler's camps there are no Russian prisoners-of-war, only Russian traitors, and we shall do away with them when the War is over.' About Jacob he said, 'I have no son called Jacob.'" *Only One Year*, p. 370

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Paul Hollander

Pilgrims on the Run

Ideological Refugees from Paradise Lost (II)

> *"How can we possibly be guilty when we have in mind the welfare of others, and of so many others? . . ."*
>
> LIONEL TRILLING,
> *The Middle of the Journey (1947)*

THE APPARENTLY insufficient alienation of the Western masses, of ordinary people, and especially the working classes, has for some time been a source of chagrin for alienated social critics (whatever explanation they provided for it), including such figures as Lenin, Sartre, Marcuse, and C. Wright Mills.

While a sense of spiritual emptiness and frustrated quest for purpose in life are undoubtedly associated with the rejection of society by intellectuals, less praiseworthy motives may play a part. Thus Eric Hoffer has written in *The True Believer* (1951):

> "There is a deep-seated craving common to almost all men of words which determines their attitude to the prevailing order. It is a craving for recognition; a craving for a clearly marked status above the common run of humanity."

Hoffer suggests that intellectuals evaluate society on the basis of the recognition it bestows on them. It is possible that the frustrated longing for power adds special tone and intensity to the estrangement of the intellectual as it betokens the inability to implement a rich store of ideas and high-minded projects. Hoffer has not been alone in suggesting that intellectuals become alienated when their talents are unrecognised and unrewarded, when they are unattached, unintegrated, marginal, lacking in status, influence, or even decent employment. Social criticism resting on such foundations would be a reasonably rational response to the condition of such intellectuals; through their own status they become sensitised to the other defects of their society, which may or may not be related to their personal fortunes.

Such an explanation will not carry much weight in regard to most of the intellectuals whom I have called "ideological pilgrims." Few of them were unattached, marginal, poorly integrated, or deprived in any objective, observable, sense. Most of them were well-known authors, academics, influential journalists, some of them celebrities and recipients of social honours in their own societies. Their work and views were far from ignored, their talents far from unappreciated. If they felt deprived or marginal, this was usually a matter of relative deprivation or perceived marginality. Status deprivation and marginality (of a more objective kind) were not significant factors in the generation of discontent, social criticism, and estrangement among our political pilgrims. On the contrary, sometimes it appears that many critically disposed intellectuals discover an additional source of unease and moral burden in their respectable social status and excellent material conditions for which they try to compensate by redoubled criticism of the social order that "feeds them" so well—as if to make sure that nobody will accuse them of having been "co-opted" or of having "sold out." Arguments stressing the marginality of intellectuals (as the explanation of their estrangement) have also become undermined by the development in recent decades of large, influential subcultures of alienation (usually in academic settings) which provide a secure basis of solidarity and support for estranged intellectuals in Western societies. Under such conditions, it is increasingly difficult to associate and explain their attitudes with reference to social isolation, defensiveness, and marginality. The critics of the status quo in our times (in Western societies at any rate) are at least as influential as the defenders of the established order.

THE PROPENSITY OF INTELLECTUALS to synthesise, combine, discern relationships and interdependencies (where none may exist), their dislike of compartmentalisation and their desire to take an "organic" view of life (which implies that things hang together, add up to something)—all these are ways of attempting to make sense of the world. Such inclinations reflect revulsion from disorder, fragmentation, and what they imply: meaninglessness. Behind these attitudes there is

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also the determination to avoid being simple-minded by accepting the world as it appears to be. The over-integrated and "organic" perception of the world expresses the intellectuals' striving not only for meaning but also for harmony.

These attitudes are exemplified by Daniel Berrigan's insistence that "the American ghetto and the Hanoi 'operation' were a single enterprise . . ."; or by Susan Sontag treating as "self-evident" the "organic connection" between the *Reader's Digest*, Lawrence Welk's television programme, Hilton Hotels, and napalming; or by Norman Mailer conjuring up from a slice of tasteless bread the following vision:

> "The sliced loaf half-collapsed in its wax paper was the comic embodiment now of a dozen little ideas, of corporation land which took the taste and crust out of bread and wrapped the remains in wax paper, and was, at the far extension of this same process, the same mentality which was out in Asia escalating, defoliating . . . the white bread was also television . . . the white bread was the infiltrated enemy who had a grip on them everywhere. . . ."

By the same token, many intellectuals admire the political leaders of totalitarian societies who offer total solutions, not compromises, bargains, or "options." G. D. H. Cole, the English economist and social-philosopher, wrote (*Russia and the Future*, 1942):

> "Much better to be ruled by Stalin than by a pack of half-witted and half-hearted Social-Democrats."

While the discontents of intellectuals do have social roots, this is not to say that they merely respond to the observable ills of society. The sources of their discontents are deeper and more diffuse than in other reaches of society. Perhaps Saul Bellow's Herzog put his finger on it when he noted that

> "the chief ambiguity that afflicts intellectuals . . . is that civilised individuals hate and resent the civilisation that makes their lives possible. What they love is an imaginary human situation invented by their own genius and which they believe is the only true and the only human reality. How odd!"

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT that accounts of the political pilgrimages, in the 1930s as much as in the 1960s (and 1970s), call into question the widely held belief that being of a critical mind is an essential attribute of intellectuals or, as Edward Shils put it, that they are possessed of an "interior need to penetrate beyond the screen of immediate concrete experience. . . ." On the contrary, it was the all too willing suspension of disbelief that characterised many Western intellectuals in these periods, as they quite readily exchanged their more traditional role of hardbitten social critic for that of the trustful admirer, and as their more typical stance of sceptical questioning gave way to zealous affirmation. The wish to believe marks the attitudes of intellectuals as much as the need to criticise, negate, or reject. It is the alternation of these two diametrically opposed dispositions that is characteristic of intellectuals rather than a predominance of the critical impulse. The critical component in the make-up of intellectuals has been greatly exaggerated; its operation is just as dependent on their basic values and predispositions as is the case with other mortals. Certainly in a social setting that they are predisposed to dislike or be suspicious of (usually their own society), intellectuals are intensely and often insightfully critical. But such critical capabilities are not necessarily transferable to other settings, however inviting a target they are for the exercise of the critical faculties.

It is the appeals and values associated with socialism which have provided the most powerful incentive for the suspension of critical thinking among large contingents of Western intellectuals over the last half-century. Such intellectuals appear to assume an affirming, supportive stance as soon as a political system (or movement) makes an insistent enough claim to its socialist character.

The appeals of socialism are also among the explanations of the tenaciousness of the sentiments denoted by the term "anti-anti-Communism." To the extent that the concepts of socialism and communism are closely linked and to the extent that socialism continues to partake of the notion of the sacred (or selfless—as opposed to the "profaneness" of capitalism), anti-communism is abhorrent. While anti-Communism provokes strong moral revulsion, the various incarnations of communism may only elicit the expression of mild distaste or somewhat abstract disavowal. While the juices of moral fervour flow when the spectre of anti-communism is raised, communism itself remains something of a dim abstraction saved from total disrepute by the political profiles of those opposing it. Or, as Lionel Trilling put it, although "one need not be actually *for* communism, one was morally compromised, turned toward evil and away from good, if one was against it."

Philip Rahv asked: "Is it possible that all these years radicals the world over have been imposed upon, ensnared by an elementary plot of mistaken identity? . . . Can it be that it is taken for socialism simply because it represents itself as such and because it seems *different*?" The word "socialism" has retained, despite all historical disappointments associated with régimes calling themselves socialist, a certain magic which rarely fails to disarm or

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charm these intellectuals and which inspires renewed hopes that its most recent incarnation will be *the* authentic one, or at least more authentic than previous ones had been.

> "The basic formula for coping with the various disappointments is always the same (after, that is, the customarily prior denial that there is anything to be disappointed about): The disappointing country does not embody 'true socialism'; therefore it does not falsify the socialist vision; 'true socialism' is either still in the future, or must be looked for elsewhere—if not in Russia then in China, if not in China then in Viet Nam, and so on, *ad infinitum*."
>
> Peter Berger, "The Socialist Myth",
> *The Public Interest*, Summer 1976

There is little evidence that intellectuals, or for that matter, non-intellectuals, living in countries considered socialist are similarly charmed or disarmed by the idea of socialism.

Cuba, or the Sugar-Sweet Utopia

"THE CUBANS know a lot about spontaneity, gaiety, sensuality and freaking out. They are not linear, desiccated creatures of print culture. The increase of energy comes because they have found a new focus for it: the community. Perhaps the first thing a visitor to Cuba notices is the enormous energy level. It is still common, as it has been throughout the ten years of the revolution, for people to go without sleep—talking and working several nights a week. It seems sometimes as if the whole country is high on some beneficent kind of speed, and has been for years."

SUSAN SONTAG

"There's direction. Here you have all these things happening and disagreement. There you get this singleness of purpose, from the university to the cane fields."

HUEY NEWTON

"Cuba is the first purposeful society that we have had in the Western Hemisphere for many years—it's the first society where human beings are treated as human beings, where men have a certain dignity and where this is guaranteed to them."

SAUL LANDAU

"... Every man was a brother; there was never any place, except perhaps Paris on liberation day, so full of hope and glory as Cuba then. For us, there was the tremendous excitement of just being there, the thrill of standing in the center of History."

WARREN MILLER

"We look to Cuba not only because of what we sense Cuba to be but because of what the United States is not. For generations the American Left has externalized good: we needed to tie our fates to someone, somewhere in the world, who was seizing the chances for a humane society. . . . Now we dig Cuba."

TODD GITLIN

"To become a public personality in Western society is to become a prisoner of a media-created image. To become a public personality in a revolutionary society is to become so at one with the people that quite unconsciously they see you in them and you see yourself in them. The West says a 'cult of personality' exists in the figures of Mao and Fidel. That is not true. Revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary commitment have destroyed the ego in Mao and Fidel and in that destruction they as men became free. Mao is China. Fidel is Cuba. China is Mao. Cuba is Fidel."

JULIUS LESTER

"But what for me is so odd, so dreamlike, so elusive about this gigantic demonstration of solidarity? . . . This is the first demonstration I have attended where the Government (damn it) is the sponsor! As we walk home . . . the demonstrators are climbing into their trucks and buses, euphorically happy and proud as any festival's children could be. For us Cuba has suddenly fulfilled her promise and we too are happy."

DAVID CAUTE

"To be with these people, to see with your own eyes how they are rehabilitating and transforming a whole nation, to share their dreams of the great tasks and achievements that lie ahead—these are purifying and liberating experiences. You come away with your faith in the human race restored."

PAUL SWEEZY

"So, Fidel Castro, I announce to the City of New York that you gave all of us who are alone in this country some sense that there were heroes in the world. One felt life in one's overargued blood as one picked up in our newspapers the details of your voyage. . . . It was as if the ghost of Cortez had appeared in our century riding Zapata's white horse. You were the first and greatest hero to appear in the world since the Second War. . . . You give a bit of life to the best and most passionate men and women all over the earth, you are the answer to the argument of Commissars and Statesmen that revolutions cannot last, that they turn corrupt or total or eat their own."

NORMAN MAILER

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THE *IDEA* OF SOCIALISM continues to capture many discontents today, as it did around the turn of the century when Emile Durkheim wrote:

> "It is a fervour that has been the inspiration of all these systems [of thought associated with socialism]; what gave them life and strength is a thirst for a more perfect justice. . . . Socialism is not a science . . . it is a cry of grief, sometimes of anger, uttered by men who feel most keenly our collective *malaise*."

And George Orwell observed, in a lighter vein:

> "One sometimes gets the impression that the mere words 'Socialism' and 'Communism' draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist and feminist in England."[1]

Central to the appeals of socialism is the promise and expectation that it can **and will** bring about better material living conditions in combination with the maintenance (or renewal) of community and thus provide the blessings of technology, industry, and urban life without the ruptures, conflicts, and disturbances associated with them under capitalism.

Even abundant consumption would be free of guilt under socialism (or communism) as the stigma of self-centredness would be removed from such pleasures in a social context purified of individualism, greed, calculation, and the yearning for material and status gain. The susceptibility to all these promises of socialism suggests a vigorous optimism about the perfectibility of both human nature and social institutions which contrasts sharply with the gloom and pessimism which pervade Western intellectuals when they contemplate human behaviour and social institutions in their own societies.

The ceaseless theoretical efforts of many contemporary Western intellectuals aimed at revising, rejuvenating, or rehabilitating and applying Marxism, the main doctrinal source of socialism, testify to its powerful and enduring appeals as much as the political pilgrimages to the countries calling themselves socialist, Bernard-Henri Lévy wrote: "We have a Marxist urbanism, a Marxist psychoanalysis, a Marxist aesthetic, a Marxist numismatics. There is no longer any realm of knowledge that Marxism fails to have a look at, no area off limits, no taboo territory . . . no cultural fronts to which it fails to send cohorts of researchers. . . ." (*Barbarism with a Human Face*, 1979).

To the tendency of intellectuals to cast aside critical faculties must be added new doubts about the attributions of idealism and disinterestedness. Not infrequently, intellectuals themselves are prone to such flattering self-attributions. Thus, for example, Daniel Berrigan wrote of himself and Howard Zinn, another anti-war activist and professor at Boston University: "Like all resisters, we are afflicted beyond remedy with the idealism of which we read so often in our history." He saw himself and Zinn as "Men of truth, who constantly search their own motivation and hearts. . . ." (*Night Flight to Hanoi*, 1969).

Attributions of idealism and disinterestedness call for re-examination when intellectuals move with lightning speed from vehement moral indignation and moral absolutism (generally reserved for their own society) to a strangely pragmatic moral relativism brought to the assessment of policies of countries they are committed to support. As a character in Lionel Trilling's *Middle of the Journey* said of Soviet policies: "certain things could not be judged by mere liberal standards." Scott Nearing,

> "who often left his home in Maine in November rather than watch hunters kill deer, defended Soviet tanks in Budapest [in 1956]. 'Hungarian White Guardists, exiled for a decade from their motherland', he explained, 'were joining the rebels to fight for the restoration of their property.' . . ."[2]

Such misjudgments and moral "double bookkeeping" (or double standards) are in part due to readiness to believe the "other side", in this case the Soviet tales of the White Guardists, however implausible they were in the light of other information about the revolt.

ANOTHER MYTH to be laid to rest is the belief in the unflinching commitment of intellectuals to freedom, and particularly freedom of expression. The absence of freedoms, as commonly understood, hardly concerned the visitors or interfered with the attractions of Mao's China or Castro's Cuba. To the extent that the lack of free expression was observed—how frequently it was overlooked!—it was excused or rationalised on the familiar grounds of temporary necessity, amply compensated for by the various achievements of the régimes concerned.

We must once more return to the concept of double standards which underlies and helps to explain the fluctuation between critical and uncritical attitudes, belief and disbelief, moral absolutism and moral relativism—or, as Ernst Fischer, the Austrian ex-Communist, put it, "the length to which a man can go, who, though neither stupid nor vicious, deliberately ceases to see, to listen, to think critically . . . so as not to doubt the cause he serves. . . ."

[1] George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937).

[2] Stephen J. Whitfield, *Scott Nearing: Apostle of American Radicalism* (1974).

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WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS in which double standards operate? The variations in the handling of moral indignation or outrage—especially on occasions when their expression would seem highly warranted—allow for a close examination of the techniques employed to defuse or stifle such impulses. Evidently people invest as much effort in suppressing moral indignation or compassion as they do in venting them. The application of double standards is central to this process.

Probably the most basic technique, or the first line of defence, is disclaiming information.[3] When people don't wish to be indignant about some atrocity, the first reaction is to deny its existence, minimise it, or cast doubt on the reliability of sources reporting it—as, for example, Noam Chomsky's questioning the reliability of refugee reports of atrocities in Cambodia he would rather not hear of. People also try (and often succeed) to systematically avoid information that might provoke a sense of outrage and create conflict between their ideological (or value) commitments and the particular incidents or facts undermining such commitments. (E.g. Jane Fonda and Mary McCarthy obviously did not favour torture but were supportive of and sympathetic towards the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese; such support would have been more difficult to sustain if atrocities committed by them were fully confronted and acknowledged.)[4] Disclaiming information, strictly speaking, does not involve double standards, since the removal or denial of morally problematic information also removes the necessity to judge similar events by different standards. The only sense in which double standards are used in this context pertains to the evaluation of evidence, which will at times be rigorous and sceptical (as for instance in the case of the Cambodian anti-Communist refugees) but relaxed and trusting when the evidence offered is supportive of existing bias or predisposition (when, let us say, other groups of refugees report some brutal military action, taken by the armed forces of the United States). Robert Conquest noted this attitude in another historical context when Sartre evidently accepted the reliability of the accounts of the victims of French torture in Algeria but needed official Soviet confirmation of repression under Stalin. An earlier statement of Sartre's may help to clarify his double standard:

> "As we were neither members of the party nor avowed sympathisers it was not our duty to write about Soviet labour camps; we were free to remain aloof from quarrels over the nature of this system, provided no events of sociological significance had occurred."

The disclaiming of information must be distinguished from plain ignorance. One cannot overestimate the significance of ignorance about the political systems evaluated by intellectuals, which has greatly contributed to the massive misapprehension of their actual character. Most of the travellers knew little about the facts of political violence and coercion, of the privileges of élite groups, the oppressive outpouring of propaganda, the enormous and stultifying bureaucracies, of all the large gaps between theory and practice, evidence of which so disturbed them in their own societies. Lack of information and lack of imagination often went hand in hand. It was hard to learn about things which were also hard to imagine —Show Trials, large-scale forced population movements, the pervasiveness of controls in daily life, the elaborate recreations of reality by propaganda or the possibility of widespread intimidation without overt, observable violence. Even if our intellectuals had availed themselves of what Arthur Koestler has called the "shock therapy of facts",[5] one may wonder how much of an impression this would have made without the imaginative identification required for their proper appreciation. For the most part, however, there was no such "therapy", and ignorance smoothed the path toward belief and admiration.

ANOTHER MAJOR TECHNIQUE available to deal with such difficulties is the contextual redefinition of particular unappealing policies or acts of the otherwise appealing régimes or political actors. Thus, for instance, Staughton Lynd and Tom

[3] For a detailed discussion of techniques in the Soviet context see Arthur Koestler, "Soviet Myth and Reality", in *The Yogi and the Commissar* (1961).

[4] Mary McCarthy evidently *preferred* (her word) to believe that the United States and not North Viet Nam was responsible for the Hue massacre. In her book *Hanoi* (1968) she describes her shock at the news that the bodies of her friends, two German doctors on a Protestant mission of help, were found at Hue. Who killed them? the South Viet Nam ARVN forces? "... worse is to think that, after all, it *may* have been the Viet Cong who did it...." But she shrunk back from any such doubts and suspicions because she was convinced of "the principle of limit governing the North Vietnamese conduct of the war" as well as of "the 'correctness' usually shown by the Viet Cong in their dealings with the civilian population." The criminal habit of purging "obsolete" disinterested do-gooders was, she argues, "much closer to the views of the American command." So who murdered her friends? "There is no way of knowing yet what really happened and I feel somewhat suspicious of American stories of mass graves.... I should prefer to think it was the Americans indiscriminately bombing...."

[5] Koestler used this expression in an essay suggesting that those enamoured of the Soviet system might be cured if sentenced to one year of forced reading of assorted Soviet material produced for home consumption. "The Candles of Truth", in *The Trail of the Dinosaur* (1970).

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Hayden, in *The Other Side* (1966), explained the North Vietnamese atrocities committed during the collectivisation of agriculture (delicately referred to as "The Events of 1956"): "We suggest that this episode should be viewed as an extension of the war against the French and the violence involved should be assessed in the same context as the terror of the resistance itself."

This technique is sometimes combined with the effort to "understand" the morally questionable incident—an effort, needless to say, selectively made. William M. Kunstler, the radical lawyer, said he thought he could " 'understand the reasoning' behind the Vietnamese government's decision to force so-called 'war criminals' to search for mines left over from the war. 'It's part of a terrible, terrible time, he added' " ("Activist Lawyer Criticises US for Violating Human Rights", *Village Voice*, 28 May 1979).

If a political system is "basically" good or "headed in the right direction", that is, if the overall context is praiseworthy (a circumstance usually deduced from the public expression of its good intentions), dissonant details must be excused and accommodated—denied and dismissed if possible—reluctantly confronted if unavoidable—but put into the "proper context", that is, deprived of significance in the shaping of moral judgment. Many Western intellectuals seem to share the propensity attributed to Lenin and his followers, and divorce unsavoury means from the purity of the ends they were supposed to promote.

Again, good intentions under such circumstances seem more important than unpleasant consequences, and idealistic motives provide absolution from harsh moral judgment. In particular, the mystique of revolutionary (or purifying) violence, that is, the violence of the best intentions, has had a great appeal to Western intellectuals and correspondingly had a lesser moral stigma attached.

Another venerable and well-known technique of silencing potential moral indignation consists of dehumanising the victim. In doing so, the morally repugnant acts are not denied but are made irrelevant—they do not count since the victims do not inhabit a moral universe, as it were; therefore, moral considerations or criteria simply do not apply to them, and those committing the moral outrages are freed of responsibility and compassion by the redefinition of their victims as non-human, or negligibly human. Contemporary history and especially the propaganda and terror campaigns of totalitarian states provide an abundance of examples of mass murder preceded by dehumanisation. The essence of this technique is the substitution of abstractions for real human beings—a process observed by Aldous Huxley decades ago:

> "when particular men and women are thought of merely as representatives of a class, which has previously been defined as evil . . . then the reluctance to hurt or murder disappears. Brown, Jones and Robinson are no longer thought of as Brown, Jones and Robinson, but as heretics, gentiles, Yids, niggers, barbarians, Huns, communists, capitalists, fascists, liberals—whichever the case may be. When they have been called such names and assimilated to the accursed class to which the names apply, Brown, Jones and Robinson cease to be conceived of as what they really are—human persons—and become for users of this fatally inappropriate language mere vermin or worse, demons, whom it is right and proper to destroy. . . . Wherever persons are present, questions of morality arise. . . ."
>
> "Words and Behaviour", *Collected Essays* (1953)

Calling policemen "pigs", popular among many Western radicals in the 1960s, is another example of this phenomenon.

FINALLY, THERE IS the mechanism of selective determinism. The determinism popular among many intellectuals in our times implies that only the behaviour of the "underdogs" is socially determined and hence *their* responsibility for their actions and attendant moral accountability are reduced. Thus determinism is selectively applied to excuse, mitigate, or condemn morally questionable acts. Since moral outrage presupposes choice on the part of those who provoke our indignation, a plausible Victim-Aggressor scheme needs a device that relieves some groups of responsibility for their behaviour but not others, again giving rise to double standards. "The rhetoric of oppressed groups is always accepted at face value; their grievances are what they perceive them to be, their motives exactly what they claim."[6] Those not in the Underdog-Victim category are always believed to have hidden intentions which need to be ferreted out. . . . But there is no longer a broad consensus among Western intellectuals as to who are deserving underdogs and authentic victims. One person's underdog is another person's topdog, and disputes attend on the establishment of widely acceptable oppressor-victim hierarchies.

A letter published on the editorial page of the *New York Times* (16 July 1972) exemplifies these attitudes in another context:

> "Listening to the stories behind each hijacker [of airplanes] points to a recurrent theme of frustration: to the hijacker the hijacking seems to represent a last, desperate effort for personal integrity. . . . It saddens me to hear these frightened, despondent men sentenced to more of

[6] James Hitchcock, "The Intellectuals and the People", *Commentary*, March 1973.

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the same despondency for 20 years. Perhaps an understanding of the man behind the act will calm our outrage in the hope that a potential hijacker can feel that the people of this nation empathize with him and with his economic and personal frustration and despondency."

On Being Anti-Utopian

THE UTOPIA-SEEKING intellectuals were the object of criticism, even occasionally of sarcasm, as it was made fairly clear that their idealisation of certain countries and their political systems—which they perceived as being endowed with utopian potentialities—was delusory. Thus, for example, the collectivisation of agriculture in the Soviet Union led to starvation in the 1930s and to chronic food shortages ever since, while the egalitarian slogans of the October Revolution gave way to hierarchy and new inequalities in the distribution of both power and material privileges. In Cuba under Castro the commitment to "moral incentives for work" failed to endure. The alleged idealism and anti-bureaucratic goals of the "Cultural Revolution" in China left behind a debris of economic disruption, cultural disarray, and repression. The list of such examples could be lengthened; the high hopes inspired by these societies were largely misplaced. Their utopian or quasi-utopian images, reflected in the pages of the travelogues, were born out of the selective perception of the visitors generously assisted by the techniques of hospitality. The urge to believe was the mainspring of the political misconceptions and misjudgments discussed above. In particular the new forms of coercion, the widespread political regimentation, and the rapid rebirth of inequality in combination with impregnable official self-righteousness in each of the countries revered have made it clear that, once more, the realisation of utopian ambitions has eluded those seeking to implement them.

Few of the old admirers would today still persist in affirming their "affection" for the Soviet Union. Similarly, and more unexpectedly, uncertainty has replaced the reverential attitudes which had been shown toward China and North Viet Nam—countries which since the late 1970s have become extremely hostile to each other. Nor did the emergence of the "Boat People" make it easy to regard Viet Nam as an exemplar of political virtue, or the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia allow for viewing the Vietnamese régime as "exercising power in new ways." More recently (in the spring of 1980) Cuba's image has suffered from the unexpected exodus of about 120,000 of its citizens, most of whom grew up under the Castro régime without apparently acquiring the taste for regimentation. At the same time, Cuban military adventures in Africa and its growing closeness to the Soviet Union did not seem to disturb the die-hard admirers of Cuban socialism. Nor did the release of Hubert Matos (the former revolutionary leader) after twenty years of imprisonment turn the attention of sympathisers to the less than utopian attributes of the Cuban system.

LARGE-SCALE UTOPIAN SCHEMES, when politically inspired and implemented, require vast amounts of coercion and a corresponding loss of personal and group freedoms. As a Czech writer put it, "You can't build utopia without terror and . . . before long terror is all that's left." Terror may not be the *only* thing left, but certainly little of what had been intended remains. Bernard-Henri Lévy observed in a similar vein:

> "the Gulag is not a blunder or an accident, not a simple wound or after-effect of Stalinism, but the necessary corollary of a socialism which . . . can aim for the universal only by confining its rebels, its irreducible individualists, in the outer darkness of a non-society. . . . We have to add: *. . . no classless society without its terrorist truth.*"

It may be possible to build utopia without terror on a communal farm in Vermont or California when such attempts are made by a small number of congenial individuals who are free to disband whenever they wish and who usually have other options should their undertaking fail or sour. But to the rejection of large-scale coercion in the service of elusive and probably unrealisable ends must be added a deep misgiving about organised, systematic, self-conscious schemes designed to make individual lives more meaningful and to maximise personal happiness by political means. Still, the anti-utopian temper need not be denuded of moral concerns, as is illustrated by the musings of a Soviet intellectual living in the Soviet Union:

> "Then what is important?
>
> It sounds banal. Self-improvement. Individual effort. Study and thought for one's own moral development. The classical liberal virtues. Being honest and loyal and kind to the ten people closest to me rather than professing my good intentions to world history or social movements. And for the country as a whole, tinkering with the economic and social system in small daily ways and stopping to *measure* what works. Measuring real wages instead of mouthing Marxist slogans. Measuring real freedom and well-being instead of talking about class struggles and 'socialist' freedom. In other words, *pragmatism*. And an end to Marxism and all other 'isms.'
>
> We used to assume socialism by itself would

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produce a better society and better human beings. . . . But this obviously isn't true. Socialism alone doesn't make good men, good buildings, good anything. And certainly not goodwill."

Message from Moscow (1969)

Consequences

HOW MUCH DOES IT MATTER what many Western intellectuals, more and less distinguished, think and feel about certain idealised societies? Are their journeys, their political pilgrimages, merely transient episodes of contemporary social and intellectual history? Are these pilgrimages evidence of a crisis of values, judgment, and common sense?

The significance of the phenomenon—the estrangement of a large number of Western intellectuals—derives, to a great extent, from the premise that these men and women, the political pilgrims, expressed attitudes and predispositions which were shared by many of their lesser known contemporaries. The authors of the travelogues reflected, in more extreme and clearly articulated form, widespread attitudes of disillusionment and confusion and, to a lesser degree, readiness to see virtue in distant societies.

Still, the question remains: What does it all add up to? How much does it matter that Western intellectuals have been enamoured at different times of the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and North Viet Nam? Will it matter if the next wave of pilgrims extols the virtues of Albania or Mozambique or Nicaragua?

It could be argued that the pilgrimages had few enduring results, especially if we consider the Soviet case: the "Red Decade" was followed by the Cold War and an upsurge of hostility toward the Soviet Union and Communist movements. With few exceptions, the intellectuals who had themselves earlier favoured the Soviet Union repudiated their pro-Soviet fervour or fell silent on the subject; some of them became politically withdrawn (whether or not they had in fact changed their minds). Several of these earlier pro-Soviet or Old-Left intellectuals emerged into public life in the 1960s, lending their support to the student protest and welcoming the new wave of disenchantment with American society which seemed to vindicate their earlier alienation. Most of them, however, did not rekindle their pro-Soviet sentiments. The uncritical fascination with China in the early 1970s gave way after Mao's death to more critical and searching attitudes. Certainly the enthusiastic accounts of visits to North Viet Nam during the war strengthened the anti-war movement and as such had some practical consequence, although it is clear that the strength of the anti-war movement had more to do with the unfavourable views of the United States and its foreign policies than with the favourable views taken of its enemy. Cuba still enjoys a reasonably good reputation among many left-wing intellectuals; on the other hand, throughout the 1960s and '70s none of these favourable assessments made much of a dent on American foreign policy toward Cuba or on the maintenance of the blockade.

What makes a difference in the long run is the cumulative impact of the denigration intellectuals direct at their own society which almost invariably accompanies the veneration of other societies. Even if one assumes that all or most of the criticism of the Western social systems is thoroughly justified, the cumulative effect of this steady debunking and preoccupation with the ills of society intensifies the sense of malaise and alienation arising out of problems and frustrations, many of which are unlikely to be resolved. These include, above all, the lack of meaning and weak bonds of community in secular, individualistic societies and the sense of powerlessness most citizens experience in such complex, mass societies today.

The long-range impact of the intellectuals' rejection of their society, their almost instinctive, reflexive disparagement of its major values, and their refusal to identify with its established institutions may have another consequence as well. Such attitudes may contribute not only to popular bewilderment but also to the low morale and loss of will of political élites—possibly, in the long run, to the erosion of both popular and élite support for the survival of Western political institutions.

It has been said that modern societies cannot long survive without the support of intellectuals. Although today the bitter and unqualified rejection of Western societies is less in evidence than it used to be in the 1960s and early '70s, neither is the prevailing ethos supportive. There is little discernible willingness to identify with, support, or legitimate Western values and institutions on the part of Western intellectuals, even among those who are not particularly hostile to their social system. The forms of estrangement are significant even if they do not always betoken clearly articulated hostility but only the passive withdrawal of support. Such a withdrawal is one among the many factors which reduce the vitality and capacity for survival of Western societies.

THE ATTITUDES and activities of many present-day Western intellectuals suggest that they believe in the possibility of maintaining their comparatively charmed existence. It enables them to remain at once critical and hostile toward the social system and privileged in their material circumstances, occupational status, and freedom of

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expression. In short, they seem to believe that "repressive tolerance" will continue and remain quite tolerable. Above all, they persist in taking the freedom of expression for granted. As Nicola Chiaromonte ironically observed:

> "We in the West no longer know and want to know what freedom is and are more or less of the opinion that political freedom . . . is a sort of commodity. It is one of the many commodities that our highly advanced society lavishes on us and we use it because it is there, as we might use a car or a washing machine. But even if it were not there, no great harm would be done."
>
> *The Worms of Consciousness* (1976)

There are many intellectuals who would reject the suggestion that a political system that assures them (and others) the freedom of expression—which is the mainstay of their professional and moral existence—deserves a measure of support.

The more far-reaching question is whether or not, willingly or inadvertently, Western intellectuals will contribute to the destruction of their relatively free societies, in part because of their illusions about other societies and their recurrent fantasies of new forms of liberation and collective gratification. If, as a Soviet émigré observer of American attitudes noted, "In the nineteenth century electorates could afford the luxury of not knowing societies different from their own and of electing statesmen who hardly knew anything about them either", this unfortunately is no longer the case. Mr Leonard Bernstein, the famous conductor-composer, speculated in an article entitled "Just Suppose We Disarmed":

> "What would they do with us? [That is, if the U.S. had unilaterally disarmed.] Why would they want to assume responsibility for . . . so huge, complex and problematical a society as ours? And in English yet! . . . [and] how can they fight when there is no enemy? The hypothetical enemy has been magically replaced by 200-odd-million smiling, strong, peaceful Americans."
>
> *New York Times,* 10 June 1980

He added that if such disarmament took place, the Soviet people would probably "displace their warlike leaders, and transform their Union of Socialist Republics into a truly democratic union."

Ignorance and illusions about other societies (some of which are quite unfriendly), coupled with the refusal of many Western intellectuals to play a part in the legitimation of their own societies or to give them any moral support, may yet have tangible consequences. One may note, for example, in the United States, the rise of a generation (or more than one) of educated young people unable to conceive of external political threats to their country and some of them ready to revive the old British slogan of "Better Red than Dead", claiming that "there is nothing worth dying for", and more specifically that "the consequences of Soviet aggression would be incomparable to those of nuclear war." The revival of the anti-draft movement certainly suggests that many members of the young generation, and especially the more educated among them, are unwilling to take any steps (even registering for a possible future draft) that may in fact remove the alternatives of surrender to Soviet pressures or nuclear war, that is, the choice between "Red" and "Dead."

IF YOUNG, PRIVILEGED AMERICANS are unwilling to register for the draft it is not merely because they are selfish or fearful but also because they have few, if any, positive feelings about their society and its comparative advantages. Since the 1960s such appreciation has been replaced, for many, by vague unease about the historical misdeeds of their country—ranging from the mistreatment of American Indians to the enslavement of blacks, from the bombing of Viet Nam to the plundering of underdeveloped countries by multinational corporations, and the contrasting living standards of Americans with those of much of the rest of the world. The alienation of college professors of the social sciences (or the humanities) filters down to the teachers of social studies in the schools and to their pupils. The mistrust and scepticism of academics, writers, journalists, movie-makers, and actresses reach the larger public. Images of American society reflected in the mass media, popular literature, social science texts and courses, and the sermons of "progressive" ministers have been largely unfavourable for almost two decades.

Emile Durkheim said, "Society is above all the idea it forms of itself." The idea that Western society has formed of itself in recent decades—with the assistance of those most systematically involved in the formulation of such ideas, the intellectuals—is not encouraging. If collective self-esteem is as important for the functioning of society as self-respect is for the well-being of the individual, the outlook is not bright.

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Stewart Brown

Zinder

1.
THE ARMY HAS NO MASTER BUT THE PEOPLE
The signboard blares its sophistry
in the snug black holsters of the border guards,
their French politeness as they strip
our luggage to its embarrassments
our broken mime inadequate for jokes—(that
this intriguing rubber dome's a Dutch amendment
to colonial correspondence . . .)—but *Durex*,
like *Coca Cola*, brooks no frontiers . . .

and in their Foreign Legion style; the bush Gendarmerie
of cobwebs, mud and crumbling slates
where *l'Inspecteur* vets all travellers,
immaculately turned, from gleaming boots to silk cravat
and so discreet; "*Vous êtes Madame ou Mademoiselle*?"
he asks, quizzing the ambiguous script
of some tired clerk in Peterborough in nineteen-seventy-six.
Above his head the stipulated portrait
of the President—Comrade General, General Comrade—
anyway, a servant of the people, smiling sternly

from his regulation frame among the maps.

2.
Those ubiquitous maps, the leitmotif
of empire, outrageous as their pinks
and blues and greens, or that "desert yellow"
which dominates these scenes, but is sand
as only the blind can see—"polished
meadows of silica." Daubed in dunes
across the endless distance, impasto
but fluid, abstracts certainly, these maps
enact a vain cartographer's wildest
fantasies—to divide and rule a continent
with square and calipers. Whoever
saw such fictions, such arrogance?

3.
But arrogance will have its victories
in the order of things;
the too spick villages,
a residue of fear in old men's greetings,
roads straight and purposeful as a Brigadier's creases
dissecting horizons north and east
to distant, unimaginable seas.

4.
The camels want no part of them,
lurching morosely from unimaginable places.
Brown as sand, pungent as stockfish,
raucous as a muezzin's call to prayer,
they shamble into the market.

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Domesticated to indifference
by an immemorial law; that from
Zinder to Benghazi, from Atar to Ouduman,
"master" and "mastered" have no meaning,
are capricious relations, eroded or reversed
by the Harmattan's demanding fealty.

And so they bear this weight of abuse,
bedsteads, straw, their own manure,
this human show of dominance
among the streets and houses of a human town.
But will remember, and revenge.

Two-toed bag-'o-bones
folded against a Saharan storm
like sealed manilla envelopes
bearing the hundredth name of god;
they know their worth, compared
to those pathetic tents of blue and black

huddled like widows, worrying their beads.

5.
But the Tuareg boy crossing
the street to clasp my hand
is not worried, is mad
more like, from the warp
of his gaze above jet *litham*
and the space the townsmen
give him. They gawp
at us, scandalised; lean nomad
and portly Englishman
holding hands in the grouting
of Africa.

What did we say?

Perhaps he spoke of poetry,
the famous epics of Tamahak
or those pictures of god
in the Tassili;
whatever, I did not hear,
mumbling embarrassed in Hampshire
French, feeling my neck
beginning to sweat,
suddenly certain, and frantic
to rinse his dreadful
favour away.

6.
For the leper's embrace is a nightmare borne
by multitudes, they hobble and scuff
to the market like traders; arranging their wounds
as others do fruit (the ripest up front,
raw, viscid) and calling like any vendor
summoning trade . . . songs old as affliction,
tuneless as grief. Grinning gargoyles

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they beg just acknowledgment, the small
tarnished change that clogs up your purse.
"*Patron, Patron!*" "*Merci Patron!*"
A woman without nose creases her head,
the toothless Baba in Fulani sombrero,
straddling a donkey, has no hands and no feet
so waddles his stumps like a marionette
as the dull coins chime in his plate.

7.
In the Banque Internationale pour l'Afrique
a furtive literary clerk whispers
requests for books in English; "Achebe,
Soyinka, Armah . . . ." Here where the bookstore
offers only Simenon, Feydeau, Dumas,
the very names are contraband.

Those evil
dealers in ideas, smuggling subversion
into quaint "folklore", seem innocent/
irrelevant enough back where dissent,
if not embraced, at least hammers hard
at the rulers' doors. Self-righteously
I make a package filched from everywhere,
stamped EDUCATIONAL, marked
UNSOLICITED GIFT, NO COMMERCIAL VALUE.
Which is all, more or less, the truth.

But the clerk never writes, and no longer
at ease, I fear the interpreters of
his literary wound were not the healers
but that brutalised strong breed
who *know* the road to revolution's laid
by such harmless, passive, beautiful ones
whose fragments of uncowed curiosity
inevitably make things fall apart.

8.
Splendid Sun-birds, Long-claws, Rollers,
they preen and flutter their inordinate plumage
on the painted bulb and palm-starred patio
of a " . . . better days" hotel. More like Shrikes
overheard, their strident calls abrupt
and loveless as their clients' beery passions.

They mob the strutting concierge, who
like a connoisseur selects the lucky ladies
for this evening's contract work, the easiest
of pickings; light-skinned strangers
anxious for exotica to gild their travelogues
or regulars, those silent, sallow men
on week-end passes from uranium.

The remainders, outraged, raucous,
flaunt their disapproval of the clerk,
tease the chosen with tales of pale diseases,
the whiteman's strange and infamous demands,
but reluctantly drift out to their work

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grubbing for coins among the bars and alleyways,
transformed by this familiar omission
from spangled ornamentals to brazen scavengers.

9.
Alone in black Zinder Monsieur le Blanc
ensures his grocery's well stocked,
his books are neat, his taxes paid on time,
maintains a cultivated friendship
with the Captain of Police, and bears
the nubile, deft attentions of his
burnished "native wife" without complaint . . .

but keeps his petrol tank well charged,
his passport and his francs are close to hand,
has an "arrangement" with AIR FRANCE:
his seat is booked and vacant, any time.

10.
For we're all
exiles, strangers, parasites
whose presence itches the scars
of empire. DEFENSE PHOTOGRAPHIER.
The hilltop barracks' howitzers
trained over the mud-brick town
defend the army from its masters;
knowing how fickle history can be.

The soldiers
read irreverence in our faces;
"*Défense de Photographie!*" That
painted Hausa wall must be Top Secret,
that quaint square roundabout,
that silent circling kite above the
Restaurant Liberté. "*Défense de Photographie!*"
Is so their power's manifested,
its blustering tyro sum.

For the market
holds on Thursday as it has
for a thousand years, and the praises
of the tinsmiths are those
their forbears sang, the fakir
and the herbalist depend on ancient laws,
while the hunchback bijou salesman
hawks his images of gods
whose potency's enshrined in the
amnesia of the tribe.

And it's
just five miles out of town
to where the final gardeners
prise their green allotments
from the sand, crop mean, reluctant
peppers and a handful of dry beans;
but *they* attend them constantly,
knowing how swift the desert
is to foreclose on its loans.

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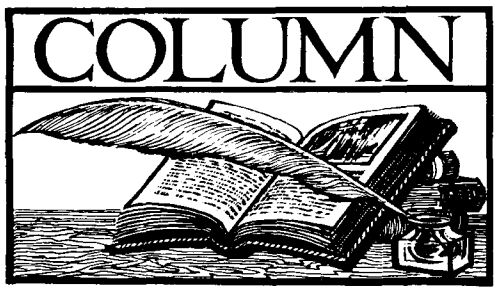

"AND A FINAL TWIST will put Green on top and Orange underneath, with Red, White, and Blue at the sides facing left, right, and away from you. . . ." No: not another solution to Rubik's Cube, but the "solution" that many now envisage for the "problem" of Northern Ireland.

The comparison may be more revealing than it seems. The twenty movable sections of Rubik's Cube can be placed in more than 43 quintillion (43×10^{19}) possible arrangements. So, perhaps, can the elements in the Ulster imbroglio. A rapid computer, we're told, would take centuries to explore all the Cube's complexities. The conflicts in the six counties may prove equally prolonged. And what is the solution to Rubik's puzzle but a form of partition, segregation, or apartheid, with each of the colours tidily banished to its homeland—neat, perfect, satisfying, and ultimately rather unreal?

That, of course, is what the comparison actually shows: that the situation in Northern Ireland, like most such political dilemmas, is not in this sense a "problem" at all. Rubik's Cube is a puzzle with a single correct solution. Northern Ireland offers no such satisfying outcome. All the "solutions" currently touted are simply "problems" in their turn.

The nightly news—another bomb, another knee-capping, another soldier or policeman killed, another hunger-striker dying, more fires, more revenge, more rubber bullets—tends to numb us with despair and boredom. A visit to Belfast is like a trip into the wartime past: Army checkpoints, bricked-up windows, bomb-sites, and a strange sense of controlled normality amid the dangers, a patient Home-Front stoicism waiting for peace to break out. The hatred, the arrogance, the threats and intimidation, the mourning, the sentimental historicism, and the exhilaration of fighting—these seldom come across in BBC bulletins or newspaper stories. Now and then, there's a burst of frankness, like John Archer's Ulster Protestant plea in the September ENCOUNTER, or Edward Pearce's *Algérie-Française* explosion against Mayor Koch in the previous issue. But most public discussion of Northern Ireland is bigoted or mealy-mouthed —or both. Republican partisans, far-Leftists, and even some Irish academics blame "British colonial rule." Right-wingers, law-and-order men, *Algérie-Française* polemicists, and most casual commentators simply condemn "the men of violence." Politicians, meanwhile, talk guardedly of "a political solution", but few of them specify what they mean.

PERHAPS it's just as well. In Algeria, after all, General de Gaulle left others to interpret his gnomic "*Je vous ai compris.*" For if politicians or editorialists, from Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone to *The Sunday Times*, were really to come clean on Northern Ireland they'd have to admit that no one in the present conflict is going to get what he wants. The only exception—which Heaven forbid—is someone who wants the violence to continue for ever. Somewhere, maybe, there does exist a League for Promoting Merovingian Mayhem, but it's not yet issued a manifesto. Instead, all parties propose "solutions." None of them seems likely to work.

"*A united Ireland*" is the pledge upheld by the Irish Constitution, espoused by Irish politicians, and paraded by the IRA. If it means incorporating Northern Ireland in the Republic, this would merely turn the "problem" on its head. Dublin might shoulder the economic burden at present borne by London; but what would "Loyalists" do? Some would leave to look for jobs in Britain. Some would stay on, and hope for the best. Some—and they might be many—would try to overturn the settlement, if necessary by violence. How great their threat would be might depend on the Dublin statute-book, as well as on the forces of law and order. But the mere prospect is probably enough to rule out such a "solution" from the start.

"*Union with Britain*"—whether "direct rule" or the *Algérie-Française* version of incorporation into the British State—seems equally untenable as a long-term aim. Dublin could not formally accept it; the IRA would go on fighting it; and, whatever "Loyalists" might feel, many British people would like to wash their hands of Ulster altogether. Full union with Britain, moreover, would require a number of changes, not all of them welcome. The domestic law and electoral system in Northern Ireland would have to be adjusted; so, probably, would existing conventions on voting and citizenship between Britain and the Republic. Ulster's land frontier would have to be far more solidly defended; and the IRA would have to be defeated once and for all.

"*Military victory over the IRA*", in fact, is yet another pseudo-solution. Its economic, political, and human cost might include martial law, many more troops acting much more ruthlessly, a "Berlin Wall" along the border, the systematic arrest and imprisonment of suspects and accessories, far more impregnable high-security prisons, and perhaps a return to the death penalty. The protests such

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action would arouse can easily be imagined. Experience suggests, moreover, that all but the most Draconian measures—unacceptable in a democracy—fall short of complete success.

"*An independent Northern Ireland*" would no doubt be popular in Britain. But it would satisfy no one else. Some "Loyalists" might welcome it: many others (like John Archer) would feel betrayed. Initially, perhaps, the IRA might find itself facing more determined opponents; but its leaders, as well as more respectable Dublin Republicans, would naturally feel that an independent Ulster was only a halfway house on the road to a united Ireland. So violence would escalate, fuelled on the one side by desperation and on the other by a sense of impending triumph. Aid and investment would dwindle, and the plight of peaceful citizens would grow still worse. Could any responsible British Government treat one of its provinces so shabbily?

FACING THESE dismal prospects, a number of ingenious commentators have proposed compromise aims, most of them relying on federal or confederal constitutions. Fine Gael has suggested an all-Ireland confederation in which the Republic and Northern Ireland would each retain "sovereignty", but would delegate some powers to central institutions. In Britain, spokesmen for "devolution" have proposed a federation of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Still others have suggested a confederal link between Britain and the island of Ireland, either or both of them in the form of separate federations, with joint representation in such bodies as the European Community.

Well-meaning as they are, these efforts at constitution-building look doomed. To succeed, they would need a degree of trust which at present is totally lacking. In themselves, they would raise countless complex issues: currency, civil rights, education, religious freedom, defence. And even if all such sources of conflict were dealt with, there would still remain a latent fear and danger. History proves that neither federations nor confederations ever stand still. If they succeed, they coalesce more tightly; if they fail, they fall apart. Falling apart, such Anglo-Irish arrangements would almost certainly increase existing frustration and bad blood. Coalescing more tightly, they would exacerbate the contradictory fears of both "Loyalists" and Republicans. As the pseudonymous "Brython Goidel" recently wrote in the European Movement's publication *Facts*, both sides in the present conflict would see such federal or confederal compromises as "political wolves in the sheep's clothing of woolly constitutions."

IS THERE, THEN, no long-term hope for Northern Ireland? To suppose so is to forget that political "problems" change. Unlike Rubik's Cube, they are affected by their context; and the context of Anglo-Irish relations has certainly been altered since Ireland and the United Kingdom joined the European Community in 1973. Ministers now meet each other regularly in Brussels and Luxembourg to discuss a host of other problems; politicians make contact in the European Parliament; civil servants collaborate on cross-border regional projects; Community funds help housing and employment in North and South alike. Community membership implies free movement of people, goods, and money. Common difficulties and common external threats may ultimately secure a common response.

Of course, the picture's not entirely rosy. The European Monetary System—or Britain's failure to join it fully—has divided the pound sterling from the Irish punt. Britain and Ireland compete for regional and social aid. The common agricultural policy is less popular in London than in Dublin. A Bennite British Government would leave the Community altogether and mount a siege economy, whatever it did about Northern Ireland. And even without such drastic and short-sighted nationalism, no one in his senses would suppose that the mere fact of Community membership would "solve" the Northern Ireland "problem."

What it does do, I suggest, is give us a chance. If Britain joins the European Monetary System and helps to promote monetary union, financial frontiers will begin to fade. If the common agricultural policy and the Community budget are properly reformed, another cause of friction will disappear. If Ireland's economic difficulties are seen in their broader context, regional and social aid can increasingly straddle the border. And if closer formal links can be formed between Britain and Ireland, on the lines of the Franco-German Treaty, more of history's wounds may gradually be healed. Youth exchange programmes, joint work on education, social reform, and civil rights, perhaps an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Council—by such means as these, mutual suspicion and misunderstanding may be dispelled. A vital proviso would be to include outspoken representatives from Northern Ireland, and to confront those features of the Republic's legislation and society which cause "Loyalists" most disquiet.

WITH THIS AS A BEGINNING, there might at least be a prospect of transforming the context of the "problem" instead of clinging to facile "solutions." Rather than retreating into further national or sectarian enclaves, it might be possible to diminish and at length remove the barriers between human beings. Some courageous Protestants and Cath-

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olics have indeed begun. And suppose that the European Community develops into the "ever closer union" foreseen by the Rome Treaty. Suppose that its member Governments work together more and more intimately. Suppose that it begins to matter less and less to which national community anyone belongs. Suppose that he can live and work on equal terms wherever he chooses in the larger Community, because everywhere he can enjoy the same legal, economic, and social rights. Would this not take some of the heat out of the conflict?

Finally, make some further assumptions. Suppose that the European Community develops beyond its present stage of economic integration towards some form of political union. This would involve a two-way movement of "devolution", upwards and downwards: the pooling of some essential political functions, including currency management, foreign policy, and defence; and the delegation to smaller, more cohesive entities of other powers at present exercised too centrally by nation-states. In some respects, this is already happening: it panics the Jacobin Right as much as the isolationist Left. What it means is that the old, Victorian *Weltanschauung* of fully sovereign Nation-States acting like atoms has to give way to a truer image—of atoms as constellations of electrons and also components of a larger whole.

WHAT COULD THIS MEAN for Northern Ireland? It could involve giving Ulster greater autonomy while linking it more closely with both the Republic and Britain. Enable citizens of all three territories to move freely among them, with equal civil rights guaranteed by the European Court. Reciprocate the present voting rights of Irish citizens living in Britain, so that Britons in Ireland could vote in its elections. Work towards a system of dual or triple but ultimately common citizenship. Establish regional assemblies in the Republic, Ulster, and Britain, to give every region a greater say in its own affairs, and representation in an Upper House of the European Parliament. Adopt harmonised electoral laws, based on the system eventually chosen for Europe. Use referenda to settle, ratify, or change such constitutional arrangements. And recognise, above all, that political "problems" are not "solved": they evolve.

ONE OF President Carter's achievements was to help change the context of the Middle Eastern "problem." By incarcerating Messrs Sadat and Begin in their luxury holiday-chalets at Camp David, he put the "problem" in a different light. Perhaps the prospect of breakfasting with him concentrated the mind wonderfully. Some such trick is clearly needed to trigger a response over Northern Ireland. Can Europe act as Camp David? Whether it can or not, we certainly need to drop the Rubik's Cube analogy, and be bold enough to abandon pseudo-solutions. If we aim at segregation, we simply ensure that Yellow comes out on top.

M

The Right To Work

They march today beneath "The Right To Work"
With, perhaps, a nodding reference to the wogs
That might, or just might not, take all our jobs.
They flow like rice, compliant, teeming bulk.

A helicopter angles overhead,
Takes desultory photographs, sheers off
And hovers through the level, cloudy trough
That forms above the floating field of heads.

They sway around the platform, raise a shout,
Sing half of Rule Britannia in the rain,
Then fall into abstraction, or a plan,
A Pollock or a delta by Pol Pot.

John Levett

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Was Marx an Ancient Historian?

By George Watson

KARL MARX loved the classics. "These old ones, at least", he wrote warmly in a letter (of 21 December 1857), on rereading Thucydides, "always remain new." I want to suggest that Marx was more of a classic than he knew, and decidedly more than his admirers have supposed—and not least in his doctrine of class war. And the ground for proposing all that is ultimately simple. It is that ancient history is full of wars between rich and poor, and modern history—even the modern history that Marx could have known or guessed at—is not.

MARX'S INTEREST in the Ancients was lifelong, if uneven. At school in Trier, where he was felt to be no more than an average pupil, he had learned Greek as well as Latin, and from a noted teacher who had edited classical texts. At that time he was thought better at literature than at history, though his school-leaving exercise, written in Latin in 1835, at the age of 17, was an essay on the reign of Augustus Caesar.[1] As a student in Bonn, where the famous Niebuhr had recently taught, he continued with Latin and Greek as well as French and German, and attended classes on Roman law and classical mythology. His reports there commend him as "industrious and attentive."

His writings, both public and private, maintain an intermittent flow of classical allusion throughout his lifetime. The Berlin thesis that he wrote between 1839 and 1841, on the difference between Democritus's philosophy of nature and Epicurus's, is concerned with correspondences between ancient and 19th-century thought, and a recent critic has called it "a kind of literary superimposition technique that brings old and new intimately together . . . ."[2] I believe that this notion of superimposing the old upon the new, entirely familiar as it was in Renaissance and Enlightenment uses of the classics, may have influenced Marx more than he was aware, inclining him to see modern and future events through a veil of ancient commentary and interpretation. He was a prophet who, more than he knew, looked back. Sometimes, it is true, such superimpositions are conscious and overt, even in his most political writings. The first volume of *Das Kapital* (1867), for example, cites Thucydides and Xenophon on the division of labour in ancient times. And his late notes on family and kinship in prehistory and among primitive nations, recently published as *Ethnological Notebooks* (Assen, 1972), are thick with references to the historical writings of the Ancients as well as to modern anthropology.

On the other hand, for a man so steeped in ancient history, some of his omissions look odd. His published writings rarely mention Livy or Polybius, for instance, though it is true that these authors figure in his late notes on kinship. But there is no reason to doubt that both Marx and Engels knew both authors. Engels, indeed, had been commended for his knowledge of Livy in the *Reifezeugnis* he was given on leaving school. He

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[1] Carl Grünberg, "Marx als Abiturient", *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung* (1925–26). For a collection of studies on "Marxism and the Classics", mainly by academic disciples, see *Arethusa* (Buffalo NY), Vol 8, no 1 (1975); and E. M. and Neal Wood, *Class Ideology and Ancient Political Theory* (Oxford, 1978), which defends Marx's theory of class as an account of ancient history against M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (London, 1973).

[2] S. S. Prawer, *Karl Marx and World Literature* (Oxford, 1976), p. 25. I am grateful to this author, and to Professor J. A. Crook, for the equal privileges of advice and encouragement in writing this study, though its conclusions are a responsibility altogether my own.

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refers to Polybius's account of military organisation in his contributions to the *New American Cyclopaedia*, and quotes Livy in *The Origin of the Family*. It is a reasonable conclusion that both men were familiar with the works of the chief historians of antiquity throughout their working lives.

MARX WAS BORN three years after Waterloo, and it is natural that his view of human conflict through history should be an outgrowth of a long European debate about the French Revolution, its institutions and its wars—not least the use and misuse of ancient history to explain (or misrepresent) the present and future of mankind. Roman history in the age of the restored monarchies could be seen as inflammatory: not surprisingly, since it had animated the very *philosophes* whom many held to have been intellectually responsible for the convulsions of 1789 and after. The Napoleonic system, what is more, had boasted the trappings of ancient Roman authority, both republican and imperial. When Napoleon seized power in 1799 he adopted the title of Consul, and five years later that of Emperor: a title not known in France for nearly a thousand years. The new France was laying claim to the dignities that Cicero and Virgil had known, much as the young republic of the United States had recently done before it. The paintings of Jacques-Louis David, who voted as a member of the French National Assembly for the execution of Louis XVI—the "Brutus and his Dead Sons" that hangs in the Louvre, for example—still give a strong sense of how austere Roman virtue, and above all the heroism of violent self-sacrifice, could be used by a revolutionary artist to make the preceding fashions of the age of Louis XV and XVI look like fribbles. And after 1802, aptly enough, David was to move from republican austerity to the military pomp of imperial grandeur, as in his vast canvas of Napoleon distributing the eagles to his troops.

After 1815, and in retrospect, the Roman virtues could look subversive. B. G. Niebuhr's *Römische Geschichte* (1811–32) does not strike one now as an inflammatory work; and in his published conversations Niebuhr appears essentially as a liberal nationalist of the Prussian persuasion, an admirer of English moderation, and a fervent hater of the French occupation of his homeland. "The evil times of Prussia's humiliation", he told a friend,

> "have some share in the production of my history. We could do little more than ardently hope for better days, and prepare for them. . . . I went back to a nation, great but long passed by, to strengthen my mind and that of my hearers. We felt like Tacitus."[3]

So Niebuhr's history of Rome, in his own estimation, was a contribution to the Prussian war of liberation against Napoleon. It was dedicated to the King of Prussia. It supports the Plebeians against the Patricians in the struggle of the social orders in republican Rome; and though its style hardly burns with Tacitean indignation against tyranny, or indeed anything else, it is possible to read it as a warning against the megalomania that too easily accompanies power. This was sometimes the view of contemporaries. Early in 1829 an anonymous article in the *Quarterly Review* accused Niebuhr of having influenced a recent bout of student militancy in German universities, those "very hives of sedition and turbulence"; and the reviewer rejoiced in the fact that Niebuhr, in a later edition of his book, had "rejected and disowned these political principles." Niebuhr died in 1831, several years before the young Marx arrived in Bonn as a freshman. It is likely enough that his reputation was still felt to be dangerous, at least in nervously conservative quarters, and that the study of ancient history was as suspect as sociology was to look in those same German universities by the 1960s.

MARX'S DEBT to the French Enlightenment and its disciples, though already studied as an accumulation of detail, still needs to be seen in a more sharply argumentative light. It is curious that Marx, who can be excessively, even tediously generous in acknowledging his sources, should still be accorded a reputation for so much originality in matters concerning what is now called the "sociology of thought": the study of how mankind comes to think and act as it does. This is emphatically not because he claimed such originality for himself. Indeed, like many Victorians, he was all too inclined to amass details of past authorities, even to the point where it could become difficult or impossible to complete a masterpiece so elaborately planned and replanned. He was a born footnoter, and some of his writings never emerged beyond their notes. He amassed facts as a squirrel collects nuts. There is more than a little of Lord Acton about him, in this respect, at least in his last years; and like Acton he was never to complete his great work, so that only the first volume of *Das Kapital* was to appear in his lifetime.

Marx repeatedly gives his sources and acknowledges his debts. In a letter of 5 March 1852, for example, he very properly denied having discovered either the concept of "class" or of "class struggle." His contribution, he insisted, had rather been to show how classes are linked to phases in productive development and how class struggle

[3] Francis Lieber, *Reminiscences of an Intercourse with Niebuhr* (London, 1835), pp. 90–1.

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leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat. All that links Marx convincingly to his intellectual predecessors, as he needs to be. And the link can be made to look still more convincing by showing how his doctrine of class arose out of Enlightenment concern with the problem of how individual man is conditioned by the social forces that have engendered and nourished him. That concern, too, can be glibly attributed to Marx—though not by Marx himself. Montesquieu in the 1740s had encouraged men to see *moeurs* as influenced by climate and geography, Voltaire soon after by the varying contexts of cultural history. A reading of Montesquieu was to teach the young Gibbon, and eventually Macaulay, to see history as a complex of social forces rather than as a treasury of exemplary or cautionary lives.

Much of this has by now faded from view, except the view of specialists, and it would probably be a matter for astonishment to latter-day Marxists—and not only to them—to learn that William Godwin, whose reputation today is one of almost fatuous utopianism, wrote a chapter for his *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* (1793) headed "The characters of men originate in their external circumstances" (I.iv), arguing that "the actions and dispositions of mankind are the offspring of circumstances and events, and not of any original determination that they bring into the world . . . "; that there are no innate ideas; and that education and environment make opinion, and not what a man finds himself endowed with at birth. "The pride of philosophy", remarks the narrator in Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams* (1794), in the solitude of his banishment,

> "has taught us to treat man as an individual. He is no such thing. He holds necessarily, indispensably to his species. . . ." (III.xiv)

That heritage from Locke, damagingly simplistic as it can easily look, was a commonplace of European intellectual debate decades before Marx was born.

Not that Godwin, or Marx after him, believed man to be always and necessarily the impotent victim of his environment. But Marx's intellectual reputation stands as high as it does today less through the obstinacy of his never-say-die disciples than through the praise heaped upon him by non-Marxist historians and sociologists who are still persuaded that his thought contains something originally and indispensably important in the field of historical analysis. When you ask them what that something is, such non-Marxists will reply in terms to do with the economic base, or social conditioning, or the theory of class: that is to say, with a proposition familiar to French and English political theory before Marx was born. It is hard to understand why this should be so, unless on some hypothesis of "radical chic." Many a middle-aged professor still imagines that to drop Marx's name with a favourable wink or nod will render himself immune from the charge of being thought a fuddy-duddy. That Marx was himself old-fashioned in his political and social theories, even by the standards of the early 19th century, is a notion that still looks new.

VOLTAIRE OPENED his introduction to the *Essai sur les moeurs* (1756) with a remark to imply that every new philosophy needs to reinterpret the history of the Ancients. "You would like the *philosophes* to have written ancient history, because you would like to read it as a *philosophe*." For Marx, too, that reinterpretative view was inescapable. His education was classical. His doctrine was itself a theory of history—past, present, and to come. And the events of ancient history had been the substance of polemics for generations before his birth. Machiavelli, in the *Discourses on Livy*, had turned early Roman history into a battery of instances of how power in any age is lost, kept, and won. The Enlightenment had confirmed that highly contemporary view of the Ancients, and had added the dimension of a sociology of thought; and the American and French Revolutions had decorated their institutions with Roman nomenclatures like Senate and Consul.

More than that, ancient history was more than ever, in the early 19th century, the common currency of educated men. Marx's fondness for classical allusion may date his writings in a faintly damaging sense, but it represents something common enough in the century between Waterloo and the first World War. In his last years, it is true, he was to widen his interests far beyond Europe, as the ethnological notes show—in time, back into prehistory; and in place, into Asia, Africa and the Americas. All that went with his dedicated reading of anthropologists like Sir Henry Maine and Lewis Morgan. But not much of extra-European reference gets into the confidently revolutionary years of the 1840s and 1850s, when newly industrial states in Western Europe, ripe (as he supposed) for civil war, consumed his hopes and his energies. The stage for class war, as he then believed, was set: a vast, necessary and redemptive act of violence, to begin within weeks or months. The road to *stasis*, or a war between the classes, was excitingly open.

MARX'S SENSE of what such a war must mean, in so far as it was based on ancient sources, is more likely to have been derived from primary texts like Aristotle's *Politics* than from Niebuhr or Mommsen; though his abuse of Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte* (1854–56) in *Das Kapital* shows he had read that work too. An amateur's view of the *Politics* of Aristotle, which is all I can

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lay claim to here, is likely enough to be defective and out-of-date; but then it can hardly be as out-of-date as Marx's—an advantage, however unfair, to take advantage of.

Aristotle, like other writers of antiquity, saw *stasis* or civil war as a struggle between rich and poor. Such struggles, in his view, are exceptionally bitter: an oligarchy by its rapacity exciting the violence of a *jacquerie*:

> "For few, or many, to have power is an accidental feature of oligarchies and democracies, since the rich are few everywhere, and the poor numerous.... The real point of difference is poverty and wealth; and it follows that wherever the rulers owe their power to wealth, whether as a minority or as a majority, this is oligarchy; and where the poor rule, it is democracy." (1279b)

This blunt view of the economic base of civil strife was bound to have appealed to Marx, and it did. Early in *Das Kapital* he calls Aristotle "the great investigator who was the first to analyse value", remarking that Aristotle's analysis of the question had been blocked, as he himself had recognised, by the lack of a conceptual tool sufficient to clarify the issue, namely a labour theory of value (I.i.ch.3). By superimposing Ricardo's labour theory of value on top of Aristotelian *stasis*, Marx believed he could solve the problems, and predict the future, of 19th-century industrial society. The poor, who are necessarily more numerous than the rich, would claim by violence the total value of what they had produced by their own labour. Provided, that is, that they could achieve an adequate consciousness of their historic role. In the early 1840s that prospect, though ultimately promising, still left much to be desired.

> "A German Aristotle who wished to construct his *Politics* on the basis of our society [he wrote bitterly of Germany in a letter of May 1843] would begin by writing: 'Man is a social but wholly unpolitical animal'...."

The remark, though not funny, is of course a joke, since Marx was almost pedantically aware that Aristotle's *zoon politikon* does not mean "political animal" but refers to the *polis* or city-state; indeed he proffers the correct translation in a careful footnote to *Das Kapital* (I.iv.ch.13). Not for nothing, one often feels as one reads him, the careful philological training of a Trier *Gymnasium* and the universities of Bonn and Berlin.

Marx's solution to class conflict, it is true, was radically different from Aristotle's, which envisaged an authority representing neither rich nor poor to hold a balance between them. Marx wanted a *stasis*. But considered as diagnosis, the views of the two men are compellingly similar, and there is no need to doubt that the one is derived from the other. "The greatest thinker of antiquity", Marx calls Aristotle in *Das Kapital* (I.iv.ch.15), approvingly quoting from the *Politics* that passage where the need for labour to operate machinery is discussed. Earlier in *Das Kapital*, in a long footnote on Aristotle's theory of barter and trade, Marx praises a section in the first book of the *Politics* concerning the difference between economics and "chrematistics", or the deplorable practice of making money limitlessly and for its own sake rather than for use: a tendency that Marx saw as one of the most contemptible elements in modern finance. Such passages in Aristotle make one see how natural it was for Marx to admire him.

TO READ THE GREEK and Roman historians is to realise how plentiful are the ancient instances of wars between rich and poor. Thucydides, whom Marx enjoyed rereading so much, tells of a revolt in Corfu "caused by greed and ambition in pursuit of office" (III.82). The notion of an economic base to human motive throughout history, which seems to some modern minds a striking and even original feature of Marxist dogma, might have seemed less so to the Ancients. Nor is it likely to look original to any historian of Greece and Rome today, whatever his political views. Such historians, like Niebuhr and Mommsen before them, commonly present a world in which violent struggles between rich and poor were an ordinary occurrence. Such similarities are admittedly not identities: Marx, for example, did not believe that a difference of class was as simple as a difference of wealth. But he believed that the coming and inevitable triumph of the proletariat would be won by achieving a consciousness within itself of its own increasing impoverishment under bourgeois rule. The spectacle of that impoverishment, in the rich industrial states of the West, would cause the combustion of a workers' revolution. To that extent, the future of mankind would resemble its classical past.

It is vital to recall here that class war is not a metaphor in Marx, and it could mislead to translate *Klassenkampf* as class struggle. Marx was always emphatic that the revolutions he promised the world would be violent. That is because, as with *stasis*, the coming proletarian revolution would be a contest for the same objects. The transition from feudalism to capitalism could be peaceful, in his view, since the one had been based on land and the other on the means of manufacture. But in the coming contest between bourgeoisie and proletariat, the prize was all one: the mines and the factories, or the very means or mode of industrial production itself. To hope or suppose that such a contest could ultimately be other than violent was to convict oneself of bourgeois delicacy or utopian illusion. Class war is a kind of war. But then

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ancient history, too, is not notable for its peaceful transitions.

THERE IS NO GRAVE DIFFICULTY, then, in appropriating Marx's own jocular phrase to himself, and in seeing him in aspiration as the German Aristotle. The social diagnosis is similar, the sources are avowed, and the title is from his own pen. Disciples could echo the call. H. M. Hyndman, who knew Marx personally and idolised him, calls him in his autobiography "the Aristotle of the nineteenth century"[4]; and that, perhaps, is the intellectual tribute Marx would have valued most. He had imposed a theoretical order on the multifarious facts of the new industrial age, and proved himself as mighty a systematiser of modern knowledge as Aristotle of the ancient.

Such is the tribute of the acolyte. But by hindsight we can venture a different and more searching interpretation of that phrase about the German Aristotle. The truth is that Marx's theory of class war works better, though still imperfectly, as a view of ancient history than of modern. Where in human events has it been validated since Marx published it to the world in the 1840s? What war between that time and today can be seen in its essence as a *Klassenkampf*, as he conceived it, or even as a war between rich and poor? The overwhelmingly significant fact about class war is that, like the Second Coming, it has not yet happened. The very instances that looked so promising to the faithful at their outset, like the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39, have failed dismally to satisfy socialist prophecy, and even failed to show that such prophecies can be made self-validating. The great wars of our age have been wars between regions and between nations. We do not lack instances of war in human history over the past century or more; the sample is large. But it does not yet contain a single clear and substantial instance of what revolutionary socialists so ardently predicted in the early and middle years of Victoria's reign.

And that, in all likelihood, is because what many then thought a prophetic gaze into the future was an unwitting obsession with a remote and richly documented past. It is tempting to conclude that Marx was an ancient historian who was naive enough to think that history foretells the future. Generals, it is said, prefer to fight the last war rather than the next—after all, they are trained for it—and it is a natural peril of the bookish mind to suppose that the future will look like the past, with only a modest list of superadded and highly specific adjustments. Though he lived in the world's first industrial state for most of his life, as an exile, Marx never visited a British factory. He was a German, a theorist, and an early 19th-century classicist; more than all that, he was in love with the Ancients, and not least with what (in his sixth notebook on the Epicureans) he called the "frank, philosophical consistency" of Greek thought. He liked things to fit together and answer to a single formula, and saw reality as one: a single, given complex of data. The indeterminate did not interest him. The Greeks (he wrote in his notes in 1839, then an ardent student of twenty-one)

> "will forever remain our teachers, by virtue of their magnificent, objective naiveté, which makes everything shine, as it were, in the pure light of its nature, however dim that light may be."

So naiveté can be magnificent. That is something like Schiller's view before him, and it remains illuminating—of the Greeks and of the Germans. Whether modern industrial societies are to be accurately accounted for in such a spirit is another matter.

[4] H. M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (London, 1911), p. 271.

The Caravan

A terrible tide of sadness
flooded down through the woods.
The caravan rocked and the door
flew open, shaking his loneliness
out like a tablecloth or duster.

A week passes before someone
finds the magazines on the floor,
the half-opened tin of sardines,
and, round the side, his boots
companionably bickering.

Simon Rae

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NOTES & TOPICS

Gandhi as a "Hunger-Striker"?

On the Master of the Fast—By FRANCIS WATSON

THERE is a natural compulsion, whenever events demand a re-run of the difficult arguments posed by hunger-strikes, to cite the example of Mahatma Gandhi. It seems no less inevitable that people should get it wrong. The *Panorama* programme of BBC television, to take one prominent instance, has a reputation for investigative diligence. Yet at an early stage of the H-block hunger-strikes in Belfast it headed back to India and allowed the impression that Gandhi employed fasting as a successful tactic for ridding his country of foreign rule, in parallel with the assumed objectives of Mayor McSweeney in Cork and, forty years on, of the Provisional IRA.

Of course, Gandhi devoted the last three decades of his extraordinary life to the achievement of his country's independence (which was bound to eventuate in one way or another) by the light of his own belief, supported by traditional sanctions, in non-violent *satyagraha*. And, of course, fasting (as distinct from its medical values which he was never tired of recommending) was an intimate component of the non-violent ethic and of the whole edifice of his personal faith. What is apt to be overlooked in a summary backward glance is the absolute primacy of the "ends and means" equation and its emphasis on motive. The nagging dichotomy of saint and politician gave even friendly critics opportunities to charge him with inconsistency or casuistry. But although he continued to insist that his mode of action was experimental he had certainly convinced himself that the strands of motivation—practical and spiritual, political and religious—could be integrated. Thus the creation of a popular movement on the basis of *satyagraha* was not merely the forging of a weapon to which he rightly judged the rulers would be vulnerable, but—and perhaps still more—a means of involving the otherwise helpless masses in the hope of ensuring that "freedom" would be something more radical than a mere changing of complexions at the upper level.

In this involvement, however, the hunger-strike tactic seemed to be implicitly reserved for the Mahatma himself: not merely because it demanded the intense discipline of soul-searching, but also because the whole creed of *satyagraha* postulated a willing submission to imprisonment and indeed to any suffering that authority might inflict. As practised by Gandhi it naturally gave the British Press and British officials cause to accuse him of "attempting to gain his ends by blackmail." And to this he had a wholly characteristic reply. Any person or authority that felt placed in the position of a victim of blackmail, he said, should "refuse to yield to it, even though the refusal may result in the death of the fasting person. . . ."

ALREADY WE SEEM TO BE some distance from the sad story of the H-blocks. But there are facts to be brought into the picture. Of his 17 fasts that would fall to be chronicled in any penetrating account of the matter, only 3 or 4 at the most had some element of challenge to the existing government. Most were of quite short duration and many of them—like the first of all, in his Phoenix Settlement in South Africa in 1913—were undertaken as gestures of "self-purification" in atonement for what he regarded as lapses among the inmates of his ashram. Others, and among them the most significant, were in the nature of appeals to his own countrymen.

In the Ahmedabad industrial dispute of March 1918, for instance, Gandhi fasted to rally the mill-workers, and went on to achieve a settlement of lasting benefit. In 1919 and 1921 he fasted in reproof of rioting and political violence. In 1922, after the Chauri Chaura incident in which policemen had been brutally done to death by an enraged mob, he fasted for five days as a "personal cleansing." At the same time, to the dismay and even anger of his political colleagues, he called off the civil disobedience movement at a moment when

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many judged it to be on the brink of success. The Chauri Chaura crime, which "no police provocation can justify", was to him a culminating symptom. "It shows the way India may easily go, if drastic precautions be not taken."

THE DRAMATIC DELHI FAST in 1924, undertaken in the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity after communal disturbances in the North-west Frontier Province, lasted for the set time of 21 days; but he had said that if crisis-point were reached he would break it off.

> "I have not taken up the fast to die, but to live a better and purer life for the service of the country."

At long last came that "finest hour" in the same cause, in Calcutta just before Independence in 1947, and in Delhi shortly before his assassination a few months later, when the old man intervened, alone and effectively, in the murderous aftermath of the partition that had defeated his dream.

A NUMBER OF Gandhi's fasts did carry the possible implication—or at least the danger—of being taken to finality. But the only one to be widely proclaimed in advance as "a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind, save water with or without salt and soda", was what came to be called the Great Fast of September 1932.

This took place in the Yeravda prison at Poona, to which Gandhi had been consigned in Viceroy Willingdon's campaign against "civil disobedience." The particular passion of the Mahatma's commitment to the cause of the *Harijans* (Untouchables) is beyond question. And the Great Fast was ostensibly directed against Ramsay MacDonald's government at Westminster, with the aim of reversing the constitutional award which (by providing for the Depressed Classes the separate electorates demanded by their political leaders) would in Gandhi's view divorce them permanently from the Hindu fold and paralyse his struggle for the abolition of Untouchability—"the vilest thing in the world." But in the nature of the case it was the Indian representatives, both of caste Hindus and Untouchables, who had to be persuaded into agreement. And when, after complex negotiations, a saving formula was dramatically secured, the telegraphed news brought the British Cabinet hurrying into session to ratify the new arrangement and save the life of Gandhi.

In this case it had been the three-week run-up to the threatened fast that had aroused intense concern and a crisis of conscience in India. The fast itself was enabled to end after less than six days. But Gandhi was in his sixties; much of the negotiation had taken place at his bedside; and his condition was already causing anxiety. The expressed British view, that it had been a ploy to recover his political standing, was shared by his main adversary, the Untouchables' leader, Dr Ambedkar, who told me many years later: "I refused to call him Mahatma. I said I was prepared to save his life, but not at the expense of my people's interests. . . ." And the bargaining had been extremely tough. But the exercise did sow the seeds for the social advance, however slow it was to prove, on which Gandhi had set his heart.

THERE WAS TO BE further fasting in Yeravda prison before Gandhi's release, once for "self-purification" for his *Harijan* campaign, and twice briefly from motives which, since they concerned prison facilities, might conceivably be argued as relevant to the modern situation in Belfast. But the concessions, which were granted with little demur, had none of the significance attaching to the H-blocks protest. In one case a fellow-detainee had asked as a devoted Gandhian to be allowed to do the scavenging work in prison, and Gandhi fasted in sympathy. In the other Gandhi himself sought release from the prohibition affecting the paper-work for the *Harijan* cause. It is hardly necessary to add that neither prisoner had been charged with crimes against persons or property.

MY OWN FIRST TALK with Gandhi, at Rajkot in Kathiawar (the region of his childhood) in 1939, followed the singular episode in the course of which he had declared:

> "The weapon of fasting, I know, cannot be lightly wielded. It can easily savour of violence unless it is used by one skilled in the art. I claim to be such an artist in this subject."

The issue arose out of agitations against misrule in the princely State of Rajkot and the breach by its ruler (abetted by his Chief Minister Virawala and, it was alleged, by the British Resident) of undertakings granted in response. A mark of Gandhi's artistry had been his request, on the day after he began his fast, for intervention by the Viceroy. Lord Linlithgow immediately arranged, with the Rajkot ruler's necessary assent, arbitration by the Chief Justice of India, Sir Maurice Gwyer, and Gandhi ended his fast on the fourth day. Gwyer's eventual decision was in favour of the Rajkot protestors. Gandhi then astonished everybody by renouncing the Gwyer award, and with apologies to the Viceroy, the Chief Justice, the Ruler and all concerned, transformed the whole atmosphere. The reforms, or at least some of them, went ahead.

Gandhi told me what he had told everyone else:

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that he had been in error in introducing an element of compulsion by appealing to the Viceroy. If I wanted to know more, he added, I should go and see his arch-opponent Virawala. I did so, and found him sulky. He had, after all, been finessed.

THREE YEARS LATER, and in a critical phase of the Second World War, it was Linlithgow who surprised the Mahatma. Gandhi had expected to be called to New Delhi for consultation when his famous "*Quit India*" resolution had been passed by the Congress Party. Instead, he and hundreds of other leaders were arrested under Defence of India Rules, their committees illegalised and press-reporting restricted. From his detention (in a villa near Poona lent by the Aga Khan) Gandhi carried on a fruitless correspondence, later to be officially published, with Linlithgow and his officials, disclaiming responsibility for the serious disturbances which followed the withdrawal of Congress control. On 10 February 1943 he began as "a soothing balm" for his distress, a "fast to capacity", which by his standard measure meant three weeks if he could last so long (he was now 74). The Viceroy called it "political blackmail" and this time resolved to sit it out. Every kind of appeal, pressure, and mediation was brought to bear upon both protagonists, but without the slightest avail. And although the reports became alarming, Gandhi went the distance and took his diluted orange-juice on the appointed day. But his health was poor for some time and Wavell, having succeeded Linlithgow, released him unconditionally on medical grounds.

Most people saw him then as a spent force. And so, in directly political terms, he was. Even so it was widely expected that he would meet the plan to partition India, the bitterest blow of his life, with another campaign of protest. Without forcing analogies with the partition of Ireland (likewise on communal grounds, though in the Indian case both sectors became independent entities) Gandhi's reaction is worth recalling. "It is we who have done this", he said, "not the British." Setting himself to meet the huge violence that ensued, Wavell's spent force became Mountbatten's one-man boundary force. It was in independent India, in the two short fasts for communal peace (both of which he declared he would resume if their healing effects should suffer a reverse)—and, finally, in the manner of his death—that the dimensions of his character and career stood revealed.

London Commentary

Who Loves a Cowboy Hero?

The Transatlantic Crisis—By EDWARD PEARCE

WE HAVE A problem here. In the first instance it is the Americans who have it, but, for those with eyes to see and heads unclouded by preconception, it is a problem for all of us. For the notion of Western Europe as being plainly at one in an alliance with the United States, give or take the occasional friendly neighbourhood nuance, is not standing up too well at the moment—yet it was yesterday's most absolute assumption. Defence is a great part of our problem; but there is something else. In Britain and, I believe, in much of the West European continent, we have limped behind the recent career of Ronald Reagan, not crediting the prospect of his victory or the reality of his administration.

There is a terrible European habit of patronising Americans, an assumption of universal-rich-homicidal-half-wittedness among them. It is not helped by the exposure of British and Continental commentators to the liberal patter of the best Washington dinner parties. Through their prism we see refracted the delusions of the chattering classes in America. *Château d'Elite Européen* may not be the best of wines but it has been laid down in our cellars for many years now and it is still drunk with pleasure. The standard vintage tastes something like this. The Americans, being very dynamic and successful (lately not particularly true, alas), are also quite useful allies if they are controlled. They remain, however, immensely crass and hysterical. They have to be restrained from starting Third World Wars from time to time by wise statesmanlike, white-moustached inheritors of

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civilisation who truly understand the complexities of the world.[1]

Discoveries and charges about the possible nature of some of our statesmanship in all our finest hours has not seriously dislodged the peculiar incomprehension born of unspoken contempt which so many British and Continentals of education have for the Americans. If there is an analogy it lies with the mixed feelings of the old rural squirearchy for the industrialisers. The landlords resented them, admired them, and married into them. The British in particular, having endured an Aristotelian economy based on the principle of inactivity as the norm, have nevertheless incurred most Soviet (and other) displeasure from their military stand in the alliance. The British have been fairly good allies and certainly better understanders of the Americans than those who have sounded off about "*les Anglo-Saxons*."

Yet an underlying assumption in recent years, not least in Britain, has been a necessary and gladly accepted decline of American resolution and relative military strength, and the triumph in that country of "Liberalism." We have not perhaps wanted Lillian Hellman's America, but to an unhappy degree the attitudes of weak Americans, whether accomplished ones like Dr Kissinger or cabbage-fisted ones like Mr Carter, have seemed to the high-thinking generality, to have been right and wise in their approach. Kissinger's terrible defeatism—the Spengler-by-the-bedside approach—was not regretted here. There is, though, nothing like immediacy for making up minds. The Portuguese, whom the Doctor appears to have written off as a Soviet gain from day one, resolved their own destiny without Spengler but with certain useful advice from Americans far enough away from the Secretary of State to be able to ignore him.

Again, we liked Carter on Defence. Even so essentially right-wing and traditionalist a figure as James Callaghan talks about what was called "*Détente*" as if it were a lost civilisation.

The absurdity of *Détente* as defined in the late '70s, the wrong-headedness of Paul Warnke's years in disadvantageous negotiation, are not to be rehearsed here. What matters is that our political class swallowed the doctrine whole and were joined in that view by most political figures on the Continent. I personally have never forgotten the incomprehension which I observed at a private political gathering between a young American defence specialist and wise old continental European editors. They chided his anxieties as if they represented a defect of reason; he was aghast at their limp, compliant apathy or defeatism.

FOR THE PRESENT UNEASY RELATIONSHIP between Europe and America derives in part from the comfort with which we all accommodated ourselves to the recent period of American decline and retreat. President Carter gave us no trouble. Neither for that matter, in the run down (and run-away) of Viet Nam, did President Nixon. Which did not stop the Western press from sedulously enjoying every last moment of glutinous ill-will around the Watergate episode.

The Americans, alas, were so busy hating each other that older anxieties about the threat these warmongers posed to us could be rested. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament spent a long time in the hangar. A weak America is an America easy to get on with, and nobody should underestimate the extent to which *schadenfreude* and political laziness combined to make the '70s a welcome period for mainstream Western Liberals and in a different way for most of the European political class.

SO RONALD REAGAN was a nasty shock. He shouldn't have been. And those of us who had followed the Kevin Phillips thesis on the growth of American Conservatism—who had followed the American news properly were *not* shocked. But it was perhaps symbolic of our wrong and priggish perceptions that Charles Wheeler, the immensely distinguished-looking BBC correspondent whose function it is to report dispassionately on events for BBC TV, could not restrain his pique at the result. He quoted from a song made up by the comedy team of *Not the Nine O'Clock News*: "I believe that there are angels in heaven, I believe that pigs can fly, but I can't believe that Ronald Reagan is President . . . ."

Such lofty unprofessionalism, outrunning the reporter's job, should not surprise us. The notion of Reagan as a senile cowboy run by mad evangelists and sinister billionaires fits the notion of Mr Reagan if Graham Greene had invented him. And that, much more than the self-evidently accomplished, civil and clear-purposed man in the

[1] "Greece and Rome, my dear fellow, Greece and Rome. . . ." is said to have been the classical view of Harold Macmillan. But Harold Macmillan and many of his Graeco-Romans also horrifically (in an unproved but also unanswered charge from Count Nikolai Tolstoy) were part of a policy which sent great numbers of Cossack soldiers and their generals to death or the Gulag at the end of the War in the knowledge that they were not Soviet citizens. The charge waits for an answer and Mr Macmillan, wise, statesmanlike white-haired inheritor of civilisation incarnate, owes it to himself to make one. See Nikolai Tolstoy, *Stalin's Secret War* (Jonathan Cape, 1981) and his previous book, *Victims of Yalta* (1979).

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Oval Office, is what commentators wanted to believe.[2]

The emergence of America from her self-destructive phase, the understanding, among a body of thought which had recruited deeply within Democratic ranks, that there was a Soviet "window" of opportunity in sight, was just so much speculative talk which failed to register deeply over here because it contained too many anxieties for us. When it did register, it brought us back to the open-bowelled panic of the CND era.

Now British politicians and their continental equivalents are unhappily placed. They are appalled at unilateralism: it is a form of open-handed appeasement in populistic form which accelerates embarrassingly the process of losing gracefully. If you are like us you hope that in some inexact way weakness can be continued without defeat following. A long, frozen tableau of the status quo without the pain and worry of sustaining it is the perfect ideal for us. Failing that, a refined form of defeat "in the Finnish mode" has its continental adherents and its friends in Britain.

There are distinctions, of course. In Britain, at my estimate, the Department of Defence diverges from the Foreign Office in the degree of its toughness of mind and the extent of its pleasure at an "Atlanticism" which has a hard-bitten America on the other side of the ocean. The Foreign Office has many virtues but it has preoccupying notions: the EEC for one (the reason for its pay roll), a resolutely Arabist view of the Middle East for another, and a great deal of Third Worldery—a concept partly made up of the fashionable aid-lobby, partly built upon an overestimate of the importance of Nigeria. (Indeed, there are times when the British Foreign Office sounds like an Anglo-Nigerian Association with appendages.)

In consequence, when Mr Reagan acts strongly, as over Angola, the FO cannot go along with him. When he does what should be seen as healthy and necessary in dealing with Colonel Gaddafi's attack, all the first assumptions here seemed to be of the "Cowboy-shoots-from-the-hip" variety. Not until Colonel Gaddafi spelt out his own culpability in that candid way of his—that he was quite prepared to assist in blowing up the world in order to define his piece of the Med—did the American President get the beginnings of a good press.

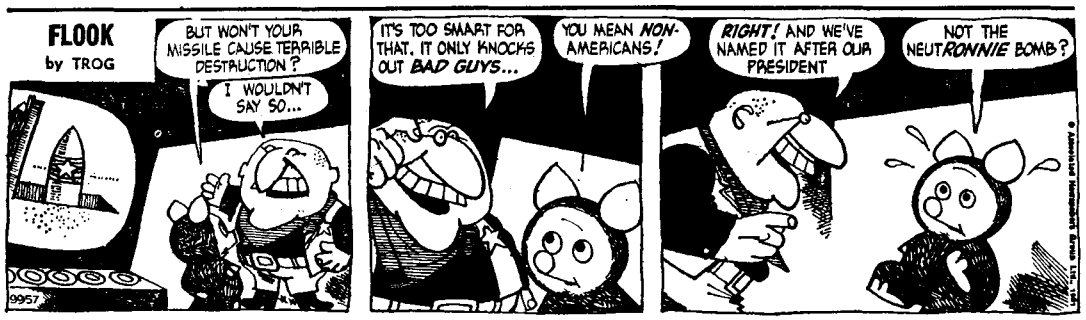
Finally, the Western response to the "neutron bomb" is not a little appalling. This, remember, is the "clean" tactical weapon which Helmut Schmidt wanted back in 1977 before Jimmy Carter's nerve gave. There is evidently nothing wrong with Mr Caspar Weinberger's or Mr Reagan's nerve. They are, quite simply, setting up the long sought-after weapon which abolishes Soviet conventional military superiority. All those Muscovite years of out-building and overspending to provide a tank mass which could swarm to Le Havre in six days is ingeniously undone, and that by a weapon which involves incomparably fewer dead and threatens the civilian population so very much less.[3]

Given the premise that nuclear weapons exist at all, a development which takes us off "mutual assured destruction" and offers a response to enemy aggression which is stepped and limited should delight rational men. They should perceive a new lease of security for themselves at a time of maximum Soviet superiority. They might perhaps see both "Finlandisation" and war as less likely. But, of course, they do not see any such thing. The

[2] There used to be a high European tradition of transatlantic analysis (Tocqueville, Bryce, et al.). Here is how Anthony Holden, the chief correspondent of the *Sunday Times* in Washington (1979–81) and now a senior editor of *The Times* in London, writes about the US President (*International Herald Tribune*), 8 September 1981):

> "The son of New Deal Democrats, he had joined the Republican Party in his fifties (age, not tax bracket, though you may be forgiven for asking). He didn't let the grass grow. It took him all of 16 years, and three attempts, to become leader of the free world. He has survived an assassination attempt, pushed some major legislation through Congress, and will shortly be declared immortal. He is rather partial to jellybeans. He has a wife, his second, called Nancy, whose favorite color is pink. If he drops by your house, offer him macaroni and cheese. He'll be in clover."

[3] Egon Bahr's notorious formula—"an infernal weapon that kills people and protects property"—would not so have inflamed the progressive world had it referred to the weapon that kills *panzer* commanders and protects the environment. . . .


FLOOK
by TROG
BUT WON'T YOUR MISSILE CAUSE TERRIBLE DESTRUCTION?
I WOULDN'T SAY SO...
9957
IT'S TOO SMART FOR THAT. IT ONLY KNOCKS OUT BAD GUYS...
YOU MEAN NON-AMERICANS!
RIGHT! AND WE'VE NAMED IT AFTER OUR PRESIDENT
NOT THE NEUTRONNIE BOMB?

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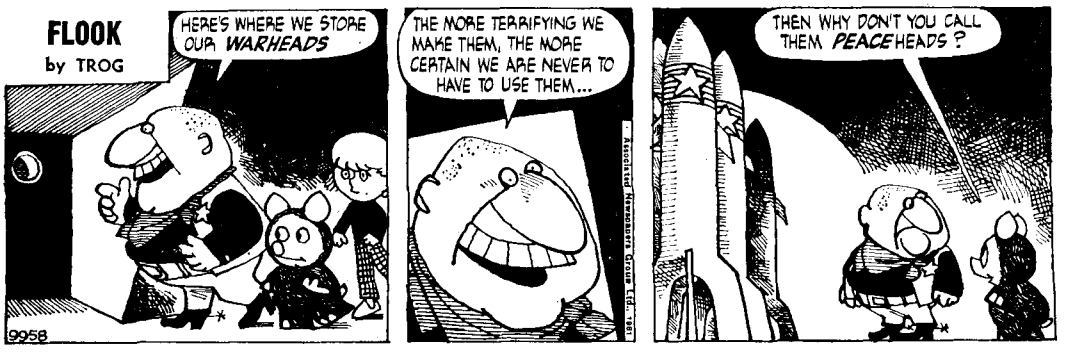
chancelleries of Europe at the moment are full of men looking nervously out of windows, fearful of the crowds which can be made to assemble should they accept increased collective military security.

THE CAUSE—the "Old Cause", with roots deep in old-time fellow-travelling and also in Western self-hatred—has returned. And it has done so at the moment when American assurance and steadiness of hand are as good as they have been since the days of Harry Truman. One has better things to do than to waste breath upon the orchestrators of selective surface-to-air pacifism. They can proclaim the dispassion behind their acts, but the question *cui bono* will say everything. European neutralism, given a strong US government, is profoundly important to the Soviets. So, suddenly more efforts are being made by people who earnestly declare "a plague on both your houses" to bring about neutralism in the West European camp.

They have had a very heavy response, greatest in Scandinavia, West Germany and Holland, but not negligible in Britain, and they are blessed with useful sympathisers, from Miss Susannah York to Herr Willy Brandt. A good working rule for our times should be: "Beware actresses and elder statesmen addressing the millions."

Now Britain and France, whatever their reservations about America, are quite at odds with the wave of panic, defeatism, and spilt hedonism which is making so large a part of NATO non-functional. They would like to go down a gentler slope, to buy SALT 2, to live in a world which provides protection without odious comparisons of world-political strength. The British, who have stuck to their nuclear option and who (with all their faults) are better on defence generally than most West Europeans, would nevertheless prefer stealth, secrecy and discretion. This is a free country but a very secretive one. Fundamentally they underestimate both the common sense and the sophistication of Mr Reagan and his advisers. They think of the small (and very unthreatening) confrontations which have taken place as *macho*, a word learned from an American school of defeatism, and one which has much to answer for. I think of those close encounters of a military kind as being nothing of the sort, but simply a measured US indication to the sillier countries of the world that the US is actually quite strong, disinclined to be abused, and possessed of the nerve and authority of a World power. One rejoices, but that is a minority view. And yet the prospects are really quite sunny. Our condition—the power and posture of the Soviet Union, the existence and development path of nuclear weapons—admits of two possibilities: a general debilitation, observed and taken advantage of by the Soviets, or a clear illustration of that US strong nerve which will be comprehended by a Soviet Union whose supreme virtue is a cautious disposition only to take what it can take safely. The question is, can we have it understood by those politicians who are watching out for menacing peace marchers? In a brilliant piece in *Policy Review*, Kenneth Adelman has argued that SALT 2, so revered in Europe, was a kind of uncovenanted blessing to the US. It spelt out a degree of US weakness relative to the Soviet Union not fully grasped by the broader public, and so became a source of strength to Secretary Weinberger in his determination to recover lost ground. Obviously, the US has gone from a "soft line", which Viet Nam had created and which the fortuitous events of Watergate had extended, to a "hard line." I know it does not do to say so, but hard lines are good for peace. The feebleness of the late Kissinger-Carter era has begun to be put to rights, partly by the results of the debate on SALT, partly by the humiliation of the hostages in Iran.

American liberals who deplored "an inordinate fear of communism", who lamented any exercise of their country's strength, who brought to foreign affairs the tone and manner of a British bishop blessing motor-bikes or a Cornwall Chief Constable deploring his *confrères*, can now turn to one another and quote the words of Laurence Binyon: "The world that was ours is a world that is ours no more. . . ." In the West Professor Edward Thompson and his peacemakers will have to work long and damaging hours to win *their* world.


FLOOK
by TROG
HERE'S WHERE WE STORE OUR WARHEADS
THE MORE TERRIFYING WE MAKE THEM, THE MORE CERTAIN WE ARE NEVER TO HAVE TO USE THEM...
THEN WHY DON'T YOU CALL THEM PEACEHEADS ?
9958

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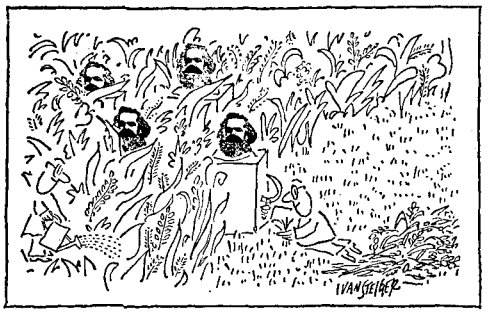
However, while we lag behind American perceptions, making their mistakes late and achieving their understandings behind schedule, we do actually follow, however patronising our tone. There will be more bruises and misfirings, as over the Angolan episode, but if America means to be what she has promised or threatened to be in recent months, Western agonies will only be a transition. She was deferred to in her days of strength, however great the resentments. The era of contraction and disengagement created talk of a world without a major US presence and encouraged the pleasurable scaring weakness of allies less trammelled and less secure.

There is no greater truth than the line in *Lear*, "All hands leave go when the great wheel runs down hill. . . ." But the great wheel has been arrested in its turning and begins to be trundled back again. Forget the Neutralism, take the patronising Elder Statesmanship in one's stride. Strength is respected even by those who moralise about it. Hands will reach out again.

The Difference between Warsaw & Prague

Parallel Lines Don't Meet—By OTA FILIP



WHAT could be more tempting than to draw a parallel between Prague and Warsaw, especially for those of us who lived through the brief "Spring" of Czechoslovakian "Reform Communism"? Both at home and abroad the opponents of the Husak régime have been following with rapt attention the developments of the Polish "Renewal", and especially notable are the efforts of the group which calls itself the "socialist opposition" to come to theoretical grips with the historic similarities and differences. For example, in the most recent number of *Listy*, the well-known émigré journal (published by Jiri Pelikan from Rome) tries to take stock of the whole situation, but interesting enough confines itself mainly to factual documentation and hesitates to consider the most fundamental question preoccupying Czechoslovak oppositionists everywhere, namely: How was it possible that the Polish Renewal of 1980–81 has actually been more successful, effective, durable than the protagonists of the Prague Spring of 1968?

A straightforward confrontation with this problem is more than a little difficult for the circle of "Reform-Communists" whose notions of reformation have not yet taken them beyond the confines of their original Marxist theories. The utterly non-Marxist character of the astonishing Polish events is not something that can be easily accommodated by the observers and analysts of the Prague "Reform-Communists" or the "socialist opposition" in the emigration. The whole process of renewal, or renaissance, or simply liberalisation has indeed been instigated by the Working Class, but quite without the benefit of the advice (not to mention "the leading role") of a party of cadres which holds itself to be essential to social change.

THIS WAS NOT THE CASE in the Czechoslovakia of 1968. Our Prague Spring never managed to move out of the shadows of the Communist Party and the basic ideology of the Marxist movement. The crisis, after all, began with the struggle for power between younger Party members against the decrepit old Stalinists of the post-War leadership.

OTA FILIP *is one of the leading democratic figures in the Czechoslovak emigration. Until the events of 1968 he was forbidden to engage in any literary or journalistic activities: during the "Spring of '68" he was prominent as a non-Communist editor and publisher. In 1969–70 he was jailed for "subversion"; but managed by 1974 to get an exit visa to the West. He lives and writes at present in Munich.*

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Czechoslovak workers had no discernible interest whatsoever in this inner-party conflict. They had had enough political education since the Party's seizure of power in 1948, after which the leadership had changed more than once, the party line at least several times, but the old miseries remained. Even in the most hopeful and enthusiastic phase of the 1968 developments in Reform Communism, individual representatives of the workers themselves (not, that is, of the avant-garde Party of the proletariat) were conspicuous by their absence. The comrades confined things to themselves, they knew each other; and all the official voices of national reform, of the politics of "socialism with a human face", came out of the ranks of the existing apparatus which, needless to say, had been thoroughly Stalinist in the previous decade. All were, in one sense or another, Party loyalists, and none of them had even the smallest doubt that it was they who were called upon by history (their guru of old) to play the "leading role" in reconstructing an intolerable social order, "ripe" for change. There was an attempt in Prague in the early summer of 1968 to re-establish the Czech Social Democracy, but this was put paid to by one of the "progressive reformers" (Smrkovsky) with the approval of Dubcek. The trade-union organisation was allowed to introduce some small first measures of democratisation within the factories, but the leadership of the trade-union movement remained safely in the hands of tough old Party loyalists.

I don't think it can be doubted that the Prague Reformers never enjoyed either the full support or the enthusiastic confidence of the workers themselves. After the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops on 21 August 1968, their attitudes emerged with rather sad clearness in the fact that, although they did indeed follow the call for a General Strike, it was only for an hour (and during the midday pause at that). Who, looking back, can doubt that the feeling was that the reformers were worth that but not much more? In other words there was no Lech Walesa in the Czechoslovakia of 1968, and there couldn't have been one, for not even the most progressive reformer among the Marxian Communists was prepared to give up or delegate even the smallest portion of their total power.

The tragic events, in my view, confirmed the lack of real confidence of the working masses in the new Party leadership. In the ensuing period all of the Reform-Communists, with the single exception of Frantisok Kriegel, put their signatures in Moscow, at the end of August, to that humiliating "Moscow Treaty" which was intended to give *ex post facto* legitimacy to the Soviet Occupation. When the Treaty was put to a vote in the Prague parliament, there were only four deputies to be found who voted against it.

Is it any wonder that the people in general took the ultimate turn of events with a certain quiet cynicism? What else could have been expected from such tried and true Party comrades? Who had ever freely voted for them (since their *coup d'état* in February 1948)? When had the citizenry ever been asked who should serve in the Government and what the political party in control should stand for?

HARD AS IT MAY BE to confess it, I am afraid that the Czech and the Sovak workers remained rather indifferent to the final fate of the Reform militants. When Dubcek and his group were removed from all offices, not a worker in any factory appeared to be moved enough to do something about it, nor about the slow purge of party and administration which followed. I can remember hearing those hard, cold, cynical remarks about the harried "Spring" spirits who rushed to the frontiers and exile abroad. How is it they were all rushing to the West which only yesterday was the fortress of imperialism, capitalism, revanchism and general decadence? . . . Why was nobody heading for the oases of Yugoslavia or of China where their "class brothers" or "ideological comrades" were also busy "reforming" totalitarian communism? For all the hopes and longings for a change, for a tolerable social order, for an economy of initiative and enterprise, indeed for a post-Communist future, the masses of the Czechoslovaks had not counted too seriously on old Party militants truly showing the way. They were, in one way or another, written off.

How profoundly differently have the Poles been ordering their affairs! The whole drama of Walesa and *Solidarity* has been having a deep and unsettling effect on the ideas of the Prague protagonists of the "human face." If things were not so clear in 1968 and even in the decade after, the Warsaw movement—with its genuinely new faces, with its unquenchable popular enthusiasm, with its "opening from below"—has made the large theoretical point graphically obvious, especially for those who always need "theory" to join with "practice." If a Communist dictatorship is to be moved from its rigidities and bankrupt habits, if there is to be a practical loosening and durable liberalisation, then the masses of the workers cannot rely on the opportunism of old Party cadres who want to be "only a little bit pregnant" with change. And indeed, in the so-called "People's [now Socialist] Democracies", they are not turning to "Reform-Communists" to lead the way, or looking to Marxian philosophers of whatever colour or revisionist flag for advice on when and how to move and for what objectives. On the long and risky journey to freedom those old cadres are proving to be only an obstacle.

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International Commentary

Has Non-Proliferation a Chance?

The Bomb Grows—By NORMAN MOSS

THE ISSUE of the probable proliferation of nuclear weapons is receiving a little more attention these days, due partly to the spectacular anti-proliferation measure carried out by the Israeli Air Force over Baghdad in June. New attention is being paid, not only to what Israel did, but to what Iraq was doing and might have done, and what other countries might do, and to the anti-proliferation policies that the big powers may follow.

The essential problem is just what it was perceived to be when the nuclear bomb first made its appearance—the dangerous coexistence of weapons of extraordinary annihilating power (and the capacity to make them) with national sovereignty.

The US Administration made a non-proliferation policy statement five weeks after the Baghdad raid. It acknowledged that the urgency of the issue "has been highlighted by the ominous events in the Middle East." The policy statement represented an abandonment of a number of positions taken up by the Carter Administration rather than any bold moves in new directions. As is true in a number of areas, the difference in philosophy between the two administrations is much greater than the difference in practice.

The Carter Administration wanted to halt the spread of nuclear weapons by restricting the spread of civil nuclear technology and materials. The Reagan Administration wants to permit the spread of civil nuclear technology and speed up the export of US nuclear materials, but keep them in the right channels. The Carter policy, like so many Carter policies, was well-intentioned and aimed in the right direction, but failed to achieve its intended effect. (It was little more than a continuation of the policy announced by President Ford in the last weeks of his administration in October 1976.)

The policy failed partly because it was an attempt to impose unilaterally an American view on the rest of the world; and partly because the genie of nuclear power was already too large and too active to be put back safely in the bottle. It may yet prove to be one of the important ironies of history that the uncorking of the bottle was mostly the work of the United States, with its earlier excessive enthusiasm for the global benefits of nuclear power in the days of the "Atoms for Peace" programme.

The thrust of the policy was anti-plutonium. It opposed the recycling of nuclear fuel in order to use the resulting plutonium in fast-breeder reactors. The fast-breeder produces more plutonium, from otherwise useless depleted uranium, so that when a chain of fast-breeder reactors is built up, the fuel can be re-used almost indefinitely. The Carter Administration argued (and many still argue) that this is dangerous because it involves stockpiling and transporting plutonium, which can be used to make bombs, and also that it is unnecessary, because uranium is not scarce, and the cost of recycling and of operating fast-breeders will prove to be very high. In keeping with this argument, President Carter cancelled the US programme to build a plant to reprocess used fuel, and suspended the programme to build a fast-breeder reactor.

The trouble is that Britain, France, West Germany and Japan, not to mention the Soviet Union, all have long-term plans for nuclear power which include fast-breeder reactors. Other European countries are thinking along the same lines. Arguments were waged across the Atlantic about the scarcity or abundance of uranium, and the cost of extracting plutonium from used fuel.

THE ARGUMENT became a quarrel because the United States put muscle behind its contentions. Most nuclear power reactors around the world are US-designed pressurised water-reactors, and these use enriched uranium as fuel. Enriching uranium is difficult and expensive; the United States has the most capacity for doing it, and is the principal source of enriched uranium. Western European countries and Japan buy most of their uranium in Canada and send it to America to be enriched,

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before bringing it over to use in their reactors.

The United States enriches uranium for customers only on condition that it retains a veto over any subsequent use of the fuel, including reprocessing. EURATOM (the EEC's nuclear-power agency which purchases fuel for members) is partially exempted from this condition. The Carter Administration would deny customers the right to reprocess fuel, and an act of Congress, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act, requires the Administration to re-negotiate the contract with EURATOM to ensure that the condition applies to EURATOM also. Canada, the major supplier of raw uranium, and Australia, which is becoming a major supplier, took approximately the same line.

America's nuclear fuel customers were furious, and remain so. They did not go into nuclear power in order to add to an uncomfortable oil dependence on the Middle East an uncomfortable nuclear fuel dependence on the United States.

THE AMERICANS failed to persuade the Europeans and Japanese that its view on nuclear fuel recycling was correct, and they backed down from trying to impose their will. They could not ignore major allied powers' own perceptions of their energy needs, or at any rate, not if they were to remain allies. President Carter used his executive powers to make exceptions to his policy and to the requirements of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act. Every request to the United States to reprocess used fuel was granted (despite the protests of some Congressmen). According to the Non-Proliferation Act, EURATOM was to be cut off from fuel exports if it refused to accept the conditions on re-use; President Carter continued to allow fuel shipments because EURATOM officials agreed to discuss a new contract, even though there is no chance that they will accept more restrictive terms.

The Carter policy as enunciated had several drawbacks. It was unilateral. It was universal, making no distinction between unstable Third World countries and major Allies. It might impel countries to turn to others as suppliers (West Germany now has 45% of its nuclear fuel enriched in the Soviet Union) or to go for nuclear independence. (Enrichment plants in Western Europe will be able to supply all of Western Europe's needs by 1985.)

The Reagan Administration's statement recognises these drawbacks. It emphasises political cooperation to achieve non-proliferation objectives rather than constraints on supplies. It promises to speed up the granting of export licences, though there is not likely to be much change in practice. It says:

"We must re-establish this nation as a predictable and reliable partner for peaceful nuclear cooperation under adequate safeguards. This is essential to our non-proliferation goals. If we are not such a partner, other countries will tend to go their own ways, and our influence will diminish. . . ."

ISRAEL'S POLICY, like President Carter's, is unilateral, and like President Carter's it is also indiscriminate. The policy was clarified by the raid on Baghdad. The raid was preceded by a number of expressions of anxiety about Iraq's nuclear research programme from several quarters, over three years. Yet, curiously, it did not follow from them, but branched off in a different direction. This does not seem to have been noticed in the flood of comment that followed the raid.

A number of governments were worried because Iraq was buying from France a research nuclear reactor, huge by the standards of research reactors, and, more important, highly enriched uranium to use in it as fuel. This, unlike the low enriched uranium which is the fuel for most power reactors, can be used to make a Bomb. The United States asked France not to go through with the sale. The French Government itself had second thoughts and asked Iraq to accept a lower-enriched uranium as fuel; but Iraq refused.

It turns out, however, that Israel was not worried about the same thing as the rest of the world. The Israelis did not bomb the building containing the small amount of highly enriched uranium that had already been delivered. They bombed and destroyed the reactor. The message of the Israeli raid is not that it does not want Iraq to have Bomb-grade uranium. It is that it does not want Iraq to have any nuclear facilities at all, because of what this can lead to. Presumably, this applies also to many other Arab countries. It is the policy practised in the Middle East a long time ago by King Herod, when he slaughtered babies at birth to ensure that none grew up to challenge his pre-eminence. It is a position that, over the years, will prove very difficult to sustain.

Iraq has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and so all its nuclear facilities are open to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency, to ensure that they are used only for peaceful purposes. Its protestations of "peaceful intent" are not accepted everywhere at face value (and President Sadam Hussain said after the Israeli raid that the Arabs should have nuclear weapons with which to confront Israel). Iraq has no nuclear power programme commensurate with its vast effort on research and training. It could pull out from the Non-Proliferation Treaty at any time, and bar inspectors from its plant.

But this would send out an alarm signal. This is what the IAEA safeguards signal is designed to do.

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It is like a burglar alarm: it does not prevent a burglary—but it lets everyone know that a burglary is taking place. This would be some time before a bomb could actually be built. By taking drastic action when the alarm had not sounded, Israel devalued the alarm system. The IAEA Director-General, Sigvard Eklund, said immediately after the raid: "The Agency's safeguards system has also been attacked." The raid weakened the authority of the IAEA just as vigilante action weakens the authority of the police. It also blurred the distinction, which others are trying to maintain, between nuclear activities which involve the presence of bomb material, meaning highly enriched uranium or plutonium, and those that do not.

THE IAEA SAFEGUARDS SYSTEM is still the fundamental instrument of non-proliferation. It is so much an accepted part of the scene in countries with nuclear energy facilities that we can easily forget how sharp a break it is with the traditions of national sovereignty. There is no other circumstance in which foreigners have a right to go into a country and inspect an industrial plant. But regular visits by the IAEA inspector, carrying his radiation detector like a briefcase, are a normal part of the operation of most nuclear facilities of any kind, and so is the sealing-off of sections of the plant until his next visit. Safeguards are applied almost universally. Even countries which have not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty are usually required by those that supply them with equipment to accept inspection and safeguards as a condition of buying the equipment.

Several events in the mid-1970s revealed the limitations of this system. The Indian nuclear explosion in 1974, carried out entirely with equipment that had been built or purchased for a civil programme, showed what could be done by a country that has only a few facilities without safeguards, and showed also how short and straight is the path that leads from certain nuclear facilities to the capability of building a bomb. In India's case, the crucial facilities were one nuclear reactor, and a reprocessing plant in which used fuel can be reprocessed and the plutonium extracted.

Brazil, Iran, Korea and Pakistan set out to purchase reprocessing plants. All these would be under safeguards. But permission to inspect, once given, could always be withdrawn, perhaps by a successor government to the one that gave it, perhaps as part of a broad Nationalist rejection of Big-Power interference. So pressure was exerted by the United States and others, and one way or another all the sales except the one to Brazil were cancelled.

THEN THE MAJOR industrial powers of East and West agreed at a series of semi-secret meetings not to export any reprocessing plants with or without safeguards, and also not to export any uranium-enrichment plants. Because the meetings took place in London, this group of nations is called the "London Suppliers' Group." West Germany refused to cancel its deal to sell an enrichment plant to Brazil, but agreed not to do it again.

All these measures are policies of denial: of denying countries the material or equipment with which they can move from civil nuclear power to nuclear bombs. This means one country or group of countries imposing its or their will on others. Ostensibly, these impositions were being made for the general good; that is, in the interests of world peace and stability. But this is not always easy to accept. Some Third World countries accuse the members of the London Suppliers' Group of trying to retain their monopoly of advanced nuclear technology in their own interests, under the guise of moral disinterestedness. Meanwhile, some members of the London Suppliers' Group were making for a while the same sort of accusation against another, the United States. For many Europeans involved in nuclear power saw in the US policies a familiar image of America: greed and self-interest masquerading as global high-mindedness. They harboured a suspicion that behind the US opposition to reprocessing lay a desire to hobble the competition in one area of nuclear power in which Europeans were able to provide a service more efficiently and more economically than the United States. Or at best, that in pursuing policies directed at world peace, it was looking after its own interests but paying little attention to those of other countries less blessed with abundant energy resources.

WHERE POSSIBLE, clearly, restrictions should be agreed upon by all those affected by them The best framework for measures to check nuclear proliferation would be the Non-Proliferation Treaty. This links all kinds of countries, the only division being between those that have and those that do not have nuclear weapons, and non-proliferation is its express purpose.

However, there is no chance of any agreement among NPT signatories on new limitations on nuclear trade. The non-nuclear-weapons states that signed the Treaty are aggrieved now that, after they had accepted the terms of an unequal treaty that was designed to perpetuate the inequality, the nuclear-weapons states did not fulfil their part of the bargain by reducing their own nuclear arsenals, which have in fact grown since the others signed the non-nuclear pledge. Furthermore, in this aggrieved mood, many of them are ready to say

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that any restrictions on trade breaches the article in the Treaty which pledges all parties to facilitate the exchange of equipment and materials. This article was inserted in an attempt to ensure the non-nuclear weapons states that in accepting voluntarily an inferior military status, they would not be accepting an inferior industrial status as well.

In fact, there are few if any non-proliferation measures that can be taken internationally. Even the NPT is not universal. Important countries have refused to sign it, such as India, Israel, Pakistan, and South Africa. The denial of certain materials, conditions on trade, insistence on international inspection, will not always have the consent of those most affected.

IT MAY BE NECESSARY to discriminate between one country and another, rather than to lay down universally applicable, non-discriminatory rules. West Germany, Holland and Belgium are not likely to tear up an international treaty and bar inspectors from their power plants, affronting allies and creating new fears and new instabilities in East-West relations in Europe; nor are they likely to undergo a revolution which will bring to power a group of men who want to do this. These dangers do, however, apply to a number of Third World countries. The claim by Japan, or West Germany, or France, that it needs plutonium for its fast-breeder programme and needs a fast-breeder programme for its industrial future may be contested; but it is at least plausible. The same claim by Iraq or Pakistan is not.

So long as national sovereignty exists, there is no way to guarantee that another country will not manufacture nuclear weapons. Anti-proliferation policy can only aim to raise the cost of doing so, and if possible ensure that there are benefits in not doing so. For this purpose, political arrangements are as important as technical ones. West Germany is not going to make nuclear weapons because the NATO alliance ensures that she is more secure without them than with them; for she would surely have to go it alone in the face of an aroused and alarmed Eastern bloc if she were to take the nuclear weapons path. The likelihood that she would be cut off from imports of nuclear materials for her civil programme would be an additional factor to give pause if the question ever arose, for Germany and other countries as well.

THE MOST IMPORTANT FAILURE of anti-proliferation measures so far has not been in the principle but in the practice. The idea is getting around that whatever stern words are uttered in advance, when it comes to it, penalties for nuclear misbehaviour will probably not be strictly exacted. Other, shorter-term factors are given priority over the longer-term aims of anti-proliferation policy.

The United States sent nuclear fuel to India for the sake of better US-India relations despite India's violation of anti-proliferation norms. It halted military aid to Pakistan when Pakistan made covert moves in the direction of acquiring a nuclear explosive capability, as required by the Symington Amendment on foreign aid; but then it resumed it in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. (A State Department spokesman said, by way of explanation: "The threat of Soviet expansionism outweighs the risk of Pakistan exploding a bomb.") France draws back from offending Iraq by cancelling a contract to supply nuclear materials, as it offended Pakistan, because Iraq supplies a sizeable portion of France's oil. Countries that have refused to sign the NPT suffer no penalty in their international relations for this refusal.

Anti-proliferation concerns can be an "input" in many foreign policy decisions. Technical and political factors are intertwined. The safer the world is, the less incentive there will be for more countries to build nuclear weapons. The less incentive there is for more countries to build nuclear weapons, the safer the world will be.

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The Education of Jacobo Timerman

A Report from Buenos Aires—By JAMES NEILSON

GREAT political crimes tend to attract less attention while they are being committed than they do later, when they have become the stuff of memoirs, fiction, and uncomfortable reappraisals among people who think that if they had known more in time they might have done something about them. It took half a century for the truth about the Soviet Union's murderous practices to sink into the Western imagination. The Nazi death-camps became "real" for Britons, Americans, and above all for Germans only after they had been dismantled. And the Argentine military régime's liquidation of perhaps 15,000 people between 1976 and 1979 did not claim much attention until the killings were over. Few Argentines have even begun to come to terms with this event. In North America and Western Europe, however, knowledge of it has given the Argentine régime a reputation that is as sinister as that of any other dictatorship in the Third World.

The man most responsible for this impressive achievement—the fate of Latin Americans is rarely of concern to Anglo-Saxons and, by 20th-century standards, the Argentine terror was a minor local affair—is Jacobo Timerman. He is the newspaper-owner who was seized on 15 April 1977 by a score of armed thugs, accompanied by one of his senior employees, who irrupted into his flat, thus starting a process that transformed him into an international "human rights hero." His captors claimed, most plausibly, to belong to the Tenth Infantry Brigade of the First Army Corps; and Timerman thought they had come to kill him. This was a reasonable supposition at the time: thousands of people had been kidnapped during the year that had passed since the armed forces had seized power and most of them had been murdered. However, after several days as yet another "missing person", Timerman resurfaced. The Army admitted it held him and the danger to his life receded. It approached him often enough in the months that followed, however. On several occasions when he was attached to "Susan", the torture machine, his heart nearly failed.

" . . . the application of electric shocks begins. The amount of electricity transmitted by the electrodes—or whatever they're called—is regulated so that it merely hurts, or burns, or destroys. It is impossible to shout—you howl. At the onset of this long human howl, someone with soft hands supervises your heart, someone sticks his hand into your mouth and pulls your tongue out of it in order to prevent this man from choking. Someone places a piece of rubber in the man's mouth to prevent him biting his tongue or destroying his lips. A brief pause. And then it starts all over again. With insults this time. A brief pause. And then questions. A brief pause. And then words of hope. A brief pause, and then insults. A brief pause. And then questions.

What does a man feel? The only thing that comes to mind is: They're ripping apart my flesh. But they don't rip apart my flesh. Yes, I know that now. They didn't even leave marks. But I felt as if they were tearing my flesh. And what else? Nothing that I can think of. No other sensation? Not at that moment. But did they beat you? Yes, but it didn't hurt."

Timerman's ordeal lasted for almost two-and-a-half years during which his situation improved—for a long time he was under house arrest in his own flat—and his fame increased. That the military had no intelligible case against him soon became obvious enough to those of us who were outside—but who waited, with apathetic fatalism, to be dragged into the régime's mini-gulag and introduced to "Susan" (Susan, or rather her amanuensis, much later wrote to my wife to tell her she had fallen in love with me because of my concern for the "disappeared"). Timerman, like so many others, had been seized because of vague suspicions and treated with such brutality largely because he had nothing much to say; and then he was held for fear of what he would say if released. Like so much of Argentina's "dirty war" it was all a pointless error that compounded itself, with sordid ferocity, as time went on.

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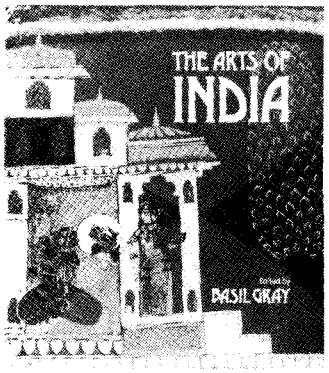

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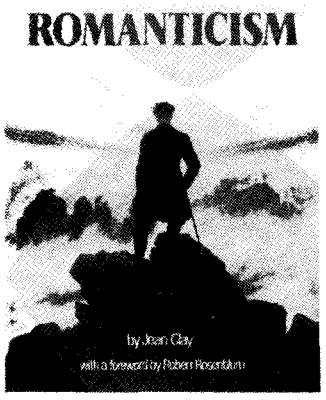

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COMPARED WITH most people who fell into the hands of the military, Timerman was lucky. For one thing it was known exactly who had him. For another, he had numerous sympathisers abroad. An international campaign, which won the support of such right-wing luminaries as Milton Friedman, Axel Springer, and Franz-Josef Strauss, in addition to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Elie Wiesel, Raymond Aron, and the Jimmy Carter administration, was organised on his behalf. Argentine justice, cowed and sluggish, helped him too. A military "court" decided he had no charges to face. The Supreme Court, after much hesitation, declared that he should go free. But the military régime was afraid to release him. What would Timerman say? What would his enemies, whose hate for him had grown because of their inability to pin anything on him, do? The régime did not have to wait long for answers to both those troublesome questions. When Timerman was finally bundled on to a plane to Israel on 24 September 1979, the warlord of Córdoba, General Luciano Menéndez, rose in rebellion: after a few days the uprising fizzled out and the general got 90 days confined to barracks. And Timerman became an international celebrity, an expert on what it feels like to be tortured and by far the most effective critic of the military régime. Within weeks of being released he was awarded a number of prizes for "defending press freedom." And when his short memoir, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*,[1] was published in the United States in May, he was a famous man and Argentina's recent past had become the subject of impassioned scrutiny.

Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number (henceforward *Prisoner* for short) is a remarkable book. Luckily for its sales, Timerman did not feel up to writing the exhaustive record of his experiences he had originally contemplated. Instead, he poured out his thoughts as they came, juxtaposing descriptions of the surreal political world that developed as Argentina decomposed and of his own struggles to make it in a society where Jews are regarded with cool suspicion, fragments of the Alice-in-Wonderland interrogation sessions he endured, accounts of his meetings with other victims of military savagery during his painful journey through Argentina's lower depths, recollections of his thoughts and feelings as he awaited "Susan" and, perhaps, death. The result, written in a crisp thriller-writer's prose, is a startling mosaic which reads more like a novel than an essay in autobiography. And this is at once *Prisoner*'s principal strength and its main weakness, the reason for its initial impact and for the doubts it later inspired. Timerman, like a novelist, has taken his experience as raw material to be processed by a powerful imagination, not as something to be recorded as accurately and as dispassionately as possible. I do not think he deliberately distorted the facts or went out of his way to skirt questions inconvenient to him as his critics in the United States (and, with more fervour, Argentina) indignantly proclaim. For all his assertive Jewishness Timerman is quintessentially Latin American and facts matter less to the Ariels of Latin America than they do to the Calibans of the North. In any case, the omissions for which he is being taken to task concern his activities before he was seized, not the nature of the people who seized him or what they did to him when he was in their hands. His description of life in Argentina's clandestine prisons has been corroborated by many other survivors. His assessment of Argentina's political forces may be questionable, but it is as valid as most others that are being made.

IT WAS NOT, needless to say, Timerman's literary skills alone that made him a witness of some consequence in the United States, where he has proven a great embarrassment to President Reagan's administration. His book was published at an appropriate moment, just when the stricken liberals were doing their best to regroup and start driving the exultant Republicans out of what they had come to regard as their own territory. Their need for ammunition was urgent and Timerman gave them just what they wanted: evidence, to their eyes at least, that "authoritarian" régimes were every bit as inhuman as "totalitarian" ones and that the Reaganite attempt to make a sharp distinction between military tyrannies in Latin America and Communist dictatorships was hypocritical nonsense. Timerman, moreover, did not merely charge the Argentine generals with an unusually bloodthirsty display of Latin American thuggery. He also made the alarming suggestion that something like a new Nazi *Reich*, preparing a new Holocaust, was emerging unnoticed in America's backyard, and President Reagan's administration was planning to give it aid and comfort for motives similar to those that once impelled some British conservatives to look benignly on Adolf Hitler.

The Reaganites soon sallied forth to do battle with this threat to their peace of mind and their new foreign policy. None of them—in the serious press, at any rate—sought to defend the record of the Argentine military, which by all but the most cynical criteria is utterly indefensible. But they did argue that, terrible as Argentina's "dirty war" was and deplorable as the behaviour of the Argentine military had been, it was not very sensible to equate their atrocities with the far bigger and much more

[1] *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*. By JACOBO TIMERMAN. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £7.95; Alfred A. Knopf, $10.95.

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systematic bloodbaths carried out by the Soviet and Nazi régimes; that, while anti-Semitism was undoubtedly endemic in Argentina, it was really no worse than in many other countries, the US included; that Argentines even at the worst of times had enjoyed far more personal freedom than Soviet citizens at the best; and that, in any case, the killings seemed to have stopped. They suggested, in other words, that the liberals regain their sense of proportion and stop pretending that the Argentine junta bore comparison with far more formidable and ruthless tyrannies elsewhere.

And then, of course, there was the question of the credibility of the liberals' star witness, Jacobo Timerman. As far as the critics were concerned, his personality and his past were every bit as interesting as the issues his book had raised. The word came from Argentina that Timerman was not the man the Americans believed, and that even liberal Argentine Jews disliked him intensely. This prong of the counterattack advanced and the liberals decorously retreated. When confronted by the Reaganite jibe: How can you take a man as devious as Timerman so seriously? they wanly replied: How can you be so low as to question the integrity of a man who has suffered so much? Timerman himself, when asked about some of the omissions and exaggerations in his book, somewhat querulously protested that the American press was reenacting the military's interrogation sessions. To a certain degree it was, for the questions being asked remained much the same.

THE GREAT TIMERMAN DEBATE in the US is, in fact, beginning to resemble the much smaller and more muted one that has been going on in Argentina since his arrest. In Argentina, too, arguments about Timerman the man have drowned out considerations about such matters as the legitimacy or otherwise of torture, what happened to the "disappeared", the rights and wrongs of holding people for long periods without charge, the sympathy many Argentines showed for terrorist violence until 1975 and anti-terrorist violence since, and the real extent and intensity of anti-Semitism.

The Timerman Argentines are talking about bears little resemblance to the man who has attracted so much interest in the United States. Timerman himself has the best explanation for this. He says his ordeal changed him "absolutely." He is probably right. But despite the conversion he says he underwent in his dank and lonely cells he is unable to shake off his old self. It follows him everywhere, always a few paces to his rear, as though (to use an admittedly exaggerated simile) Saint Paul could never leave Saul of Tarsus behind him.

American Immigrants in Israel

Social Identities and Change
by Kevin Avruch

Since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 more than 45,000 American Jews have migrated there, the majority in the years following the Six-Day War in 1967. These persons traded security and prosperity for a life of relative hardship and the constant threat of war. What made immigration a compelling choice for them? What motivated their decisions, and what kinds of adjustments to Israeli society have they had to make?

Avruch, an anthropologist, brings these problems alive through personal accounts gathered in extended interviews with nineteen immigrant families.

Published September 1981, £15·40 cloth

The University of Chicago Press

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JACOBO TIMERMAN, the publisher of *La Opinión*—a copy of *Le Monde* that could (while Franco was still alive) convincingly claim to be the best Spanish-language newspaper in the world—was a member of the Argentine establishment. He was not a full member, however. In the first place he was a *parvenu* who had hoisted himself up, with determination and intelligence, from threadbare poverty. In the second, he is a Jew, and in Argentina a Jew will be condemned for behaviour that would inspire admiring chuckles if indulged in by anyone else. None the less, he shared most of the establishment's vices. His attachment to democracy was, for example, ambiguous: an admirable ideal, no doubt, but hardly practicable in Argentina for the time being, where certain necessary but unpopular measures must always be taken first. In 1966 Timerman conducted a vicious propaganda campaign against the elected government of President Arturo Illia, thus helping to create a propitious climate for a military coup that destroyed what may have been the last chance of becoming a democracy Argentina ever had. On many other occasions, both before and after, he involved himself in anti-democratic cabals, whether military or civilian. He was generally on first-name terms with representatives of the exotic fauna of the far Left and the far Right. Even when *La Opinión* was annointing, of all people, Juan Perón, the Argentine Charles de Gaulle, he managed to remain on excellent terms with high-ranking military officers who would later remove Perón's widow from power and persecute the Peronists.

This promiscuity was not at all unusual in Argentina. Neo-Fascists or left-wing terrorists are (or, in the case of the latter, were) familiar figures in the best society. Many came from upper-class families, wore elegant suits, could talk about horses, painting, and politics in a charming manner, and consorting with them did not indicate any special sympathy for their particular cause. Timerman, in fact, simply played the characteristic Argentine game in which politics, while often murderous, is not taken very seriously; the criteria employed when judging the issues that arise are more aesthetic than anything else. But because Timerman was, despite his apparent acceptance, always an outsider his swashbuckling style earned him numerous enemies. Few risked attacking him during his years of success. They repressed their envy and their righteous distaste, and silently awaited his fall. When it came they rejoiced. No sooner had he been arrested than popular magazines started to carry "exposés" about his past. Nobody, not even journalists whose careers he had helped make, came to his defence. And, although some people have begun to question the right of the military to treat him as atrociously as it did, Timerman remains one of the most hated men in the country, a symbol of deviousness and malice. He recognises this himself, saying wryly that as far as the Argentines are concerned he is the Antichrist. His success in the United States has, needless to say, increased the fury of his many enemies: in Argentina anti-Americanism is as vehement as anti-Semitism and derives from a common source.

TIMERMAN's eagerly acclaimed come-uppance was ostensibly a result of his association with one David Graiver, a rackety young financier who dreamed of becoming an international banker. Like many such Argentines—and there have been quite a few in the last decade—he soon overreached himself and his improvised empire came tumbling down, bits of it crashing on to the heads of investors in the United States and Belgium as well as in Argentina. Graiver himself vanished in a mysterious plane accident in Mexico in August 1976, but some people think he is still alive somewhere. The Argentine military were less interested in Graiver's financial escapades, however, than in his alleged connections with the Montoneros, a terrorist movement whose leaders, at one time right-wing Catholic Nationalists, had jumped across the spectrum to become left-wing Peronists with a strong appeal for disgruntled young Argentines in the late 1960s and early '70s. According to the military, Graiver had been the Montoneros' investment broker, farming out in Wall Street the $100 million or so they had derived from ransoms and robberies and paying them back the interest. In addition to this supposed activity, Graiver—who, it is worth remembering, was a fairly respectable figure before his affairs came apart—had helped Timerman raise the money to start *La Opinión*.

The military faction that seized Timerman had been hot on the trail of the "Graiver group." Had Timerman been anyone else (and Graiver's business partners included many solid people, among them an Archbishop and a former Economics Minister) it would probably have contented itself with politely questioning him over lunch. But, Timerman being the man he was, it decided that he was the key to something far bigger than a mere financial swindle. Putting two and two together and getting five, the officers assumed that as Graiver was hand-in-glove with the Montoneros and Timerman was Graiver's partner, Timerman was a Montonero as well. Suddenly, everything began to make sense. Timerman and Graiver were both Jews, and was it not known that the Jews had no love for the Catholic Argentina the Army wanted to rebuild on the wreckage of populism? Timerman was a "Zionist", and certain connections between early Marxism and Zionism did not escape their alert eyes. *La Opinión*, moreover, had been a left-wing paper whose cultural section had

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been deeply imbued with the Marxism that was fashionable a decade ago. Was it not then reasonable to conclude that Timerman was involved in a sinister plot, financed by the Montoneros, to subvert traditional values? The detested Timerman, they were sure, must be the mastermind behind an evil conspiracy to support the Montoneros' onslaught on Argentine institutions by destroying its culture, the "national essence."

Once they had established this to their satisfaction everything came together. There was, for example, the "Andinia Plan", a right-wing fantasy in which Israel, confined to a thin strip in the Eastern Mediterranean where it was surrounded by hostile Arabs, would transplant itself to Patagonia to form a far less vulnerable Jewish state on territory taken from Argentina. Timerman's jailors questioned him assiduously about this latest variant of "the Jewish plot to dominate the world." Soviet attacks on Israel and Zionism were shrugged off as just another proof of Jewish duplicity: everyone knew that the Jews were as powerful in the Kremlin as they were in New York.

The willingness of these right-wing generals to believe that the US and the Soviet Union were not really enemies at all but, manipulated by the Jews, partners in a vast geopolitical enterprise, is easy to understand in the Hispanic context, where both Marxism and Capitalism are often seen as two facets of a single materialist challenge to Spanish Catholicism. Ever since the Counter-Reformation Spanish traditionalists and their cousins in Latin America have been obsessed with the threat to their spiritual integrity from "alien" doctrines; and nowadays their diatribes against liberal capitalism and Marxist materialism are frequently interchangeable. Even now, hardly a day goes by without an ecclesiastic or an army officer expressing the need to fight both. To a certain kind of Latin American mind—and also, of course, to many people in Nazi Germany—Bolsheviks and plutocrats are brothers under the skin. The concept of a Zionist-Capitalist-Marxist alliance to do down Argentina may seem wackily improbable to a Briton or to a North American. To an Argentine Catholic nationalist it is the most natural thing in the world.

ARGENTINE ANTI-SEMITISM, a much discussed subject since Timerman's release, owes more to the traditional Hispanic attitude towards the outside world than it does to the Austro-German anti-Semitism embraced by Hitler.

In the 15th century the Spanish Jews, who formed a brilliant, prosperous, and influential community as they did several centuries later in Central Europe, were disliked partly because they were dangerous rivals for wealth and power, but mainly because they, like the Moslems, could not be

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integrated into the homogeneous society proposed by medieval Catholicism. The existence of a large community which refused to accept the conventional vision seemed obviously dangerous to a society whose welfare was believed to depend on its faith. In these circumstances it was not enough for the Jews to be inconspicuous or outwardly to conform. False conversions were of little use. To appease the fervent they had to cast off their Jewishness entirely; and the Inquisition was established to ensure that no "new Christians" mocked God by pretending to convert but continuing their heretical practices in private. The Inquisitors were not concerned with racial purity but with religious purity. They were afraid of what we would call today "ideological infiltration." Their epigones in 20th-century Argentina, which has by far the biggest and most prosperous Jewish community of any Spanish-speaking land, are for the most part similarly unconcerned with the Jews' "racial characteristics", whatever they may be. Like the Inquisitors before them they are bothered by the presumed ideological unreliability of the Jews, their role as carriers and propagators of "alien" thoughts. In their hearts, anti-Semites in Argentina think the Jews are the dedicated foes of Christendom. Timerman quotes a succinct encapsulation of this belief:

> "Argentina has three main enemies: Karl Marx, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of society; Sigmund Freud, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of the family; and Albert Einstein, because he tried to destroy the Christian concept of time and space."

Perhaps Milton Friedman will one day be appended to this distinguished list of disturbing Jews, because he tried to destroy the Christian, that is to say the Thomist, concept of economics.

BUT ALTHOUGH Argentine anti-Semitism has deep roots in Hispanic history, German anti-Semitism made its own peculiar contribution.

As elsewhere in the West where violence is explicitly or implicitly held in high regard, the military feats of the Nazis stir many imaginations and confer on Nazi symbols an exciting and, for some, irresistible glamour. That this is so in Argentina is ironic: a Nazi spokesman once called Argentina a "country of monkeys" and the South Europeans, from whom most Argentines derive, had a lowly place in the Nazis' racial hierarchy. Despite this difficulty, however, the Nazis have many admirers. Just how many is impossible to say: the proportion may be smaller than in Great Britain or the United States, where "Nordic" pretensions may seem less outlandish. And Argentina's Nazis are far less visible; they are not to be found swaggering around Buenos Aires with swastikas on their leather jackets.

It would none the less be a mistake to make much of this, as government propagandists frequently do. If a few hundred London skinheads adopt a version of Nazi regalia to dumbfound their fellow citizens it does not matter very much. But in Argentina anti-Semites who make a secret cult of Nazism often find themselves in positions of considerable power. Argentina, moreover, is a very unstable society where murder for political or quasi-political purposes is quite common. There are, also, no institutional barriers able to contain outbreaks of anti-Semitism: Argentina's institutions are phantoms. And Argentina lacks an independent public opinion willing to raise the alarm if anti-Semitism starts gaining strength; public opinion, such as it is, is timid and humble and can be silenced overnight. The only real barrier, in fact, is the government and the leaders of the armed forces who, whatever their personal views, realise that militant anti-Semitism, if released, would cause the country untold harm. The régime, however, could easily change or be removed. It is therefore easy to conceive of a situation arising in which large-scale pogroms could be carried out. If they were they would be the work of a small minority; but the majority, as its behaviour during the "dirty war" makes plain, would be most unlikely to lift a finger to help the victims.

TIMERMAN is, if anything, even more unpopular among Argentine Jews than he is among Gentiles. He always was. Before his arrest and after his release he drew attention to himself and never for one moment tried to hide the fact that he was a Jew. Now, moreover, he is drawing attention to the entire Jewish community, an unpardonable offence in the eyes of most of its members. Community leaders are particularly outraged, as well they might be, by Timerman's cruel comparison between them and the hated *Judenräte* of Nazi-occupied Europe, and by the similarities he finds between their statements and those of German-Jewish leaders when the Holocaust was approaching. Do they suspect there may be some truth in this? Perhaps; certainly the parallels cannot escape them. But what can they do? Jewish assertiveness would surely stimulate anti-Semitic assertiveness. Is it not better to let that sleeping monster continue its dream-infested slumbers?

Their strategy may not have worked in Nazi Germany, but it has worked elsewhere, notably in Argentina. An Argentine Holocaust, Timerman's own experiences notwithstanding, seems as unlikely as the implantation of *apartheid* in Great Britain. Argentines are not Germans: they are far less thorough and lack real ability to organise, as the state of their society makes distressingly obvious. So until there are some genuinely convincing signs

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that a new Holocaust is in fact in the making most Argentine Jews will prefer to stay where they are, accepting their disadvantages: the incessant slurs they must hear, their bleak prospects in the armed forces or the diplomatic service, the occasional swastika daubed in a public lavatory, the endless accusations of "dual loyalty." They are not as blind as North Americans sometimes think and if they find their present situation better than leaving their homes and their country and trying to start anew, it would be presumptuous for a Gentile to tell them they are mistaken.

There were other factors involved in Timerman's arrest besides his connection with Graiver and his unrepentant Jewishness. One was his amiable relationship with the government itself.

By 1976 *La Opinión*, in pursuit of the *Zeitgeist*, had been transformed from a flamboyantly left-wing publication into a sober supporter of military rule—but its previous stance had not been forgotten by the "hardliners" who took note of Timerman's friendly contacts with the "moderates" who constituted the most visible portion of the military régime. These "moderates", especially the then President Jorge Rafael Videla and his successor, President Roberto Viola, did not take the "Zionist-Capitalist-Marxist" plot as seriously as many of their comrades. They were also weak-kneed enough to concern themselves with their government's "image" in the "decadent" United States and even banned some anti-Semitic publications in an effort to improve it. If the "moderates" could have been shown to have been on suspiciously warm terms with the arch-criminal Timerman and his alleged associates in what the Right calls "intellectual subversion" their position in the armed forces could have been undermined—and the Right would at last have got its chance of seizing control of the government and buckling down to the task of cleansing Argentina of all its impurities. The "moderates", however, managed to ride out the Graiver affair by dismissing some of the officers most worked up by it; but they waited two-and-a-half years before daring to make the extremists hand over their captive, Timerman.

THE COEXISTENCE OF "moderates" and "hard-liners" in the military régime and the inability of one group to overcome the other makes the task of deciding whether Argentina is, or was, merely "authoritarian" or fullbloodedly "totalitarian"—a matter of considerable importance in Washington these days—very difficult. Liberals can point out that quite senior figures in the régime nursed totalitarian designs and tried to implement them. Conservatives can point out that despite everything Argentines are very much freer than the inhabitants of any totalitarian country and that there is no evidence to prove that the government as such has

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encouraged anti-Semitism. The truth, as is usually the case where Argentina is concerned, is hard to locate. One might say that under the military régime Argentina has been an obese and slovenly authoritarian state enclosing a lean and fanatical totalitarian state struggling to assert itself. The former is still trying, although not very hard, to stifle the latter. Although it has not been ideally successful there can be little doubt that for the last two years at least it has had the upper hand. But, as the authoritarians are now losing their grip, the totalitarians could easily rise again in the not too distant future.

Timerman had the great misfortune to fall among totalitarians who had no interest in anything except furthering their dream of reshaping Argentina, and the minds of Argentines, in accordance with their own detailed specifications. So he naturally concentrated on them and in so doing has produced a damning case. But the totalitarian "hardliners", while long able to cock a snook at the authoritarian "moderates", never really predominated. It may well be that the "moderates" made little attempt to rein them in, partly for fear of gang warfare or even civil war, partly because they were not unpleased with some of the results of their depredations. Perhaps there will never be a definitive answer to the question: were the "moderates" directly responsible for the "dirty war" or were they responsible by default? Disentangling one's own motives for action or inaction, let alone those of other people, is usually hard enough.

Among the Extreme Right's grudges against Timerman was his defence of human rights. He was never the "relentless champion of human rights and social justice" of the Weidenfeld & Nicolson blurb-writer's imagination. But then hardly anyone in Argentina was. *La Opinión* did, however, show more interest in legality and civilised standards than most other Argentine newspapers at the time, even though that interest was too mildly expressed to disturb the military's sleep very much. Once Timerman was undergoing interrogation, however, *La Opinión*'s cautious and compromising "advocacy of human rights", like its left-wing wild oats, was among the charges levelled against him. This was confirmed by none other than his first inquisitor, the then chief of the Buenos Aires Province police, Colonel (now retired General) Ramón Camps, who, as his contribution to the defamation of Timerman, released a tape-recording of some of the interrogation sessions.

Printing *habeas corpus* notices for two days before being ordered by the government to desist was to Camps, like virtually everything else Timerman had done, part of an intricate plot to weaken the forces of light in their battle against the hosts of darkness in what the generals call "the Third World War." It was, however, only when Timerman was a free man again that human rights became his absorbing passion. It was not that he had lacked the requisite courage before: he had, after all, dared to take on Isabel Perón's ruthless adviser José López Rega (like many Nazis, a keen astrologer) when that strange individual's career was at its zenith and most Argentines cowered before him. Timerman had also been brave enough to defy the terrorist gangs when they could murder and maim at will. It was simply that, in common with most of his countrymen, he had not regarded human rights as a matter of importance. Only when he was brought face to face with men who despised them and had him in their power did he learn what it was like to be a counter in the political game and change his mind.

THAT, LUCKILY FOR HIM, was one lesson Andrew Graham-Yooll was not forced to learn. He got away, emigrating to England, in late 1976. Whether he was just one step ahead of the cruising Ford Falcons with well-armed thugs, scavenging for victims, or in no serious danger at all, is impossible to say. Journalists who were far more outspoken than he ever was survived unscathed; but, then, some who were afraid to offend anyone at all vanished forever. In the circumstances, he was probably wise to get out while the going, for him at least, was still good.

Like Timerman, Graham-Yooll belongs to an incompletely integrated community which is generally disliked. The "Anglo-Argentines"—English when among Argentines, Argentines when among Britons—have a lot in common with the Anglo-Indians of the subcontinent (and, for that matter, with the Jews). Although their ambiguous situation may often be uncomfortable, it does help make them excellent observers of the societies in which they live. They are at once inside it and outside it, participants and spectators. Graham-Yooll, who was the *Buenos Aires Herald*'s news-editor for about a decade before leaving his native land, makes full use of the advantages conferred upon him by his position and, in *Portrait of an Exile*[2] has provided us with by far the best description of Argentina in the 1970s.

This very interesting book is more than the reflections of a sensitive man whose home is always somewhere else. It is also an elegy for the Argentina he knew, a country haunted by messianic fantasies and brutalised by sordid violence where the distinction between politics and gangsterism is vague, and where the shifting clouds of suspicion move erratically, hanging over conservatives (in so far as any Argentine can be said to be conservative) one month and over left-wingers

[2] *Portrait of an Exile*. By ANDREW GRAHAM-YOOLL, Junction Books, £9.95, paper £3.95.

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the next. Like large numbers of sons and daughters of immigrants, Graham-Yooll was responsive to the terrorist dream. Unlike many of them, he was too decent and honest to become an actor in the confusing drama that was being played. He remained a reporter, standing on the rim, who savoured with some relish the corrupt and raffish climate that pervaded everything. Its flavour was—and is—Dostoevskian, a pot-pourri of disembodied ideals, moments of tenderness, sudden overwhelming perceptions, dialogues that in retrospect acquire a frightening significance, wild lunging after truth, and everything else that comes bubbling up when student rebels aflame with far-fetched Utopian plans for refashioning society engage in all-out warfare against secret police and the military guardians of a decaying system.

It should all belong to literature, not reality; but it was very real indeed for a number of years. Britons and North Americans have so far been spared this subculture. Most people have not, and if Argentina ever emerges from its nightmare—an increasingly unlikely prospect—to become a tame, well-ordered democracy, the world Graham-Yooll evokes so well will doubtless acquire a romantic haze and be recalled with nostalgia. Even Graham-Yooll, no moralist, sometimes forgets just how corrupt and debilitating it really was.

In this kind of world there are no neutrals. The terrorists told Graham-Yooll this; and the military régime, with hints rather than clear-cut statements, confirmed it. As far as the "security forces" were concerned, Graham-Yooll belonged to the wrong side. He had certainly spent a lot of time with the smartly-dressed leaders of the terrorist bands, and some of his friends actually enrolled in their ranks. Many of them are either dead or in exile. The sardonic sketches he draws of some of the individuals he knew—how improbable they seem now! how typical then!—and the anecdotes he tells of their adventures and misadventures, their casual inhumanity, the drab hunted lives of the hangers-on when they realised they were doomed, ensure that these "disappeared" people at least will survive in a tenuous fashion. In 1980 Graham-Yooll returned to Buenos Aires for a few days to find it a city of ghosts. His homeland had vanished. The buildings and the streets remained, like the ruins of an ancient and not very admirable civilisation struck by disaster, but the life he had known had gone. This would not be a matter for much regret were it not for the fact that it has been replaced by something just as bad—a vast emptiness—and that the future shows every sign of being even worse.

IS THERE A useful moral of the Timerman story? His experience does not teach us, as so many liberals would have it, that a decent self-respecting country like the United States should automatically dissociate itself from a régime like Argentina's: in some circumstances it clearly should not. In this particular case, however, it is probably just as well that the Carter administration kept the Argentine generals at arm's length. Their régime is brittle and unpopular, for one thing. For another, had Washington enjoyed intimate relations with it during the "dirty war" it would now, needless to say, be an "accepted fact" in Left-wing circles that the CIA had organised the slaughter of thousands of Argentines in an experiment to test some new anti-revolutionary strategy for use in the Third World (and, who knows, Europe and the United States as well). By concerning itself with the victims of the régime's brutality, however, the United States eroded the burning anti-Americanism that is so common in Latin America: local tyrants are no longer so easily equated with American "imperialism" as they once were. On balance, Washington's human rights drive probably did more good than harm for the United States in Latin America.

The lesson to be found in Timerman's experience is simpler and of less limited application than the foreign-policy debaters think. It is that those who contribute to the destruction of "bourgeois morality" are dismantling their own defences as well as those of their enemies. Timerman, whether from commercial motives or because he liked doing so, helped to make Argentina the kind of society in which thousands of people could be made to "disappear" and prominent newspaper-owners could be jailed and tortured without anyone batting an eyelid. Others, of course, did far more than he did to remove the traditional restraints that had kept Argentina a relatively civilised place; and Timerman never completely abandoned the boring old values they were based on despite his fascination with mechanistic creeds and his pleasure in his ability to work the Argentine political system. It was to these values that he clung during his hour of trial and they saw him through. But his belated recognition of their true worth will not expunge his past entirely. For years he bent his principles for the sake of expediency. The end he espied—a socialist state without the blemishes of Argentina's peculiar version of capitalism—was so dazzling that it blinded him, as it blinded so many others, to the implications of the means employed to bring it nearer. But the torture he underwent and the bullying interrogations he was subjected to differed little if at all from the treatment the extreme left and the less scrupulous Peronist "progressives" (fascists in their early socially conscious stage) meted out to their rivals. The villains of his book, of which Colonel Camps is only one, are in many ways interchangeable with the socialist "heroes", like Fidel Castro and Ho Chi Minh, he once allowed to be praised so lavishly in his newspaper, *La*

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Opinión. They too are men whose infatuation with a certain vision drove out whatever respect they may ever have had for the rights of others and led them to subordinate everything to its realisation.

Once, in a signed article, Timerman tried to convince his critics that he was not so unprincipled as they asserted by insisting that he would never allow American intervention in South-east Asia to be justified in his newspaper. Ironically, the same people who had committed that unforgivable "crime"—and Jimmy Carter, it is worth remembering, was among the last to see the light and repent—were precisely those who intervened in Argentina to save Timerman for motives that are not totally dissimilar from those that induced them to confront communism in Viet Nam.

Like thousands of other educated, sensitive, and politically knowledgeable Argentines of his generation and the one that followed, Timerman took the cruelty that began to pervade Argentine society for granted. He apologised for its governments, understated their shortcomings, and explained away their lapses: irrelevant ethical considerations should not be allowed to disturb the political game. Had he been overlooked by the "hardliners" he could easily have become one of the most effective propagandists of the "process", flying to Washington to persuade concerned liberals that all was well with Argentina's Jewish community and that the interests of Argentina's progressives would be served best by forgetting the "disappeared." That, indeed, was the role he was beginning to assume when he was seized. But then the violence came hissing up through the cracks he had helped to make and reached *him* and, for the first time in his life, he learned just what happens when ideology overwhelms humanity. His fellow countrymen, who have mercifully been spared his experience, have not even begun to learn that lesson, thus ensuring that Timerman will be by no means the last "prisoner without a name" in a "cell without a number" in Argentina.

Wisdoms of Hindsight

New Fiction—By PENELOPE LIVELY

AT THE TIME, history is never apparent. Just as the conceptualisation of history is the construct of historians, so the past itself, when one is walking around in it, has none of the impersonality of "history." The historical process may well be going on, but few of us feel ourselves consciously to be a part of it. Except, of course, at times of extremity: war, revolution. Which explains why historical novelists prefer to head for the more tumultuous areas of human experience. The quieter processes of economic or social change do not make for gripping fiction; public events must be seen to intrude on private lives. Here are two books which select, in that sense, exceptionally promising combinations of time and place: the Ukraine in 1917 and the Persian Empire in the reign of Darius.

First, though, a short and extraordinarily powerful novel which attends to the past in an entirely different way.[1] George Steiner has, elsewhere, called language "the vessel of human grace and the prime carrier of civilisation." He has observed that this same achievement—the one that sets us apart from animals and enables us to communicate, to remember, and to produce poetry—was used by the Nazis to chronicle their obscenities: "In the Gestapo cellars, stenographers . . . took down carefully the noises of fear and agony wrenched, burned or beaten out of the human voice. . . . The regulations governing the number of blows to be meted out on the flogging block at Dachau were set down in writing." He has argued that the German language itself has been infected by becoming the vehicle of Nazi perversion: "Make of words what Hitler and Goebbels and the hundred thousand Untersturmführer made: conveyors of terror and falsehood. Something will happen to the words. Something of the lies and sadism will settle in the marrow of the language." Even more bleakly, he has proposed the inability of language to defy bestiality: after Auschwitz, no more poetry.

In this brief novel, Steiner re-works this theme, and others, into a fictional statement. Hitler, aged ninety, survives deep in the swamps of the Matto Grosso, guarded by a single man whose ammunition has long since been spent. He is tracked down, at last, by a band of Jewish fanatics dedicated to this single purpose: Eichmann, Bormann, "the bleeding old ghost" himself. And, in a last superhuman obsessive determination to get him out alive, to bring him to the final reckoning, they carry him out on their backs, through the ghastly leech-ridden teeming swamps, the hunters themselves gaunt with fever. "You must not let him speak. . . . His tongue is like no other. It is the tongue of the

[1] *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.* By GEORGE STEINER. Faber, £2.95.

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basilisk, a hundred-forked and quick as flame. . . . When He made the word, God made possible also its contrary."

The narrative jumps between the apocalyptic journey and the reflections of its participants and others more peripheral. Hitler himself does not speak until the end, and then the basilisk tongue is given a diatribe of special pleading in which he derives his destiny from the Jews themselves: "The secret power of your teaching, of *yours*. A chosen people. . . . Your invention. One Israel, one *Volk*, one leader." And proposes hideously that *he* may be the Messiah, the true Messiah, ". . . the new Sabbatai whose infamous deeds were allowed by God in order to bring His people home." The state of Israel springs from the ashes of the Holocaust.

Language, and memory. The fanaticism of the Jewish hunters in the swamps is fed by the conviction—the knowledge—that to forget is to betray and that ". . . until each name is remembered and spoken to the LAST SYLLABLE, man will have no peace on earth. . . ." The six million names.

> ". . . and if each and every one of us . . . were to rise before morning and speak out ten names that day, ten from the ninety-six thousand graven on the wall in Prague, ten from the thirty-one thousand in the crypt at Rome, ten from those at Matthausen Drancy Birkenau Buchenwald Teresienstadt or Babi-Yar, then out of six million, we should never finish the task, not if we spoke the night through, not till the close of time. . . ."

And for this reason Hitler must be brought to Jerusalem, on the living backs of his hunters, like the old man of the sea.

The passage above is the core of the novel, it seems to me, a part of a litany of remembrance uttered by the man who has masterminded the hunt, in which he catalogues names and the horrors attached to those names and, in the process, achieves a kind of poetry. The awful chronicle has rhythm and resonance and the force of words: it demonstrates, in fact, this perversity of language, rendering words the meaning of which is intolerable into a structure whose elegances mock the content. The point is made.

Other things have been written on the hunt for Nazi survivors: thrillers, journalists' pieces. The seriousness and the power of this novel show them for the sawdust they are. It should be written about with passion, or not at all.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK, author of over fifty books, is known mainly for his science fiction works. *Byzantium Endures*[2] is an historical

[2] *Byzantium Endures*. By MICHAEL MOORCOCK. Secker & Warburg, £6.95.

ABORTION
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At the heart of the current debate over abortion is the question of what is at stake: for the liberal/feminist group it is the woman's autonomy over her own body; for the conservative/"pro-life" group it is the life of the fetus itself. Rejecting both of these views as extremes, L. W. Sumner opts for a more moderate position for which he provides a moral foundation. His aims are both practical and theoretical, and he brings up many pertinent questions.
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novel: long, complex, richly peopled, as confusing, turbulent and intense as the events it describes—the factional fighting in the Ukraine in 1917–18. Moorcock purports to be presenting the recollections of one Colonel Pyat, an émigré washed up in the Portobello Road area in the Sixties and Seventies ("I have, incidentally, checked with both the local Serbian church and the Russian church in Bayswater, and nobody there remembers Pyat"); the book is furnished with map and list of *dramatis personae* (and a facsimile page from Pyat's manuscript, for good measure). The reader, battered with names and places and political groupings and re-groupings, certainly needs these aids.

Pyat is an unlovable character, to put it kindly: a zenophobic anti-Semite with Pan-Slavic ideals, bombastic, insensitive, opinionated, a braggart. The problem with first person narration when the reader is thus alienated by the personality of the narrator is compounded here with misgivings about the truth of his account—misgivings encouraged in a sense by the author. How much of this is fiction? How much is fact? I take it that the history is truth (with all the ambiguities therein suggested) but how far can or should we accept Pyat's account of his role within it? As he says himself, "How some people will alter the past. . . . We all like to see ourselves in a good light, of course, but the lengths to which some go are quite astonishing." Not that the lengths to which Pyat himself goes are at all convincing; he betrays, deceives, switches sides when expedient, grabs at opportunities, and survives. And all this as an almost beardless youth; halfway through this torrential novel he is still only eighteen, having moved from Odessa to Petrograd to Kiev, acquired and shed mistresses, embarked on an allegedly brilliant career as an engineer.

And while he brags and proclaims, his brash and opportunistic personality shines through the lush precipitate prose, alternately exasperating and amusing. He rants about the Jews, while often being taken for Jewish himself—"The great Cossack hawk's beak is frequently mistaken in the West for the carrion bill of the vulture"; he changes names, is intermittently befriended by a bizarre Cockney adventuress called Mrs Cornelius who flits in and out of the narrative, he shunts between the Bolsheviks and the Whites and pronounces on the chaotic swirl of history in which he is caught up:

> "The Whites began by fighting for God; they ended fighting for their own pride. The Reds began by fighting for the people; and ended fighting for their own authority. The Russian is naturally communal. We never needed Marx and his corrupted philosophy of revenge and destruction. Tolstoi and Kropotkin sought a philosophy suited to our national character. . . . God's greatest signs are Man and the universe itself. . . . If only the Jew would leave me alone. Vengeance! he cries. Russian chivalry is condemned. Tanks crush the Russian heart. Barbarian wire rips Russian flesh. . . ."

He becomes a cocaine addict and discovers women and is imprisoned by the Bolsheviks and escapes death by good luck and by good management. And as the country seethes and boils around him he pontificates on life and on history and on ideas—with, presumably, the wisdom (if that is the right word) of hindsight. We are, after all, reading the memoirs of an old man, selected and slanted as they may be.

The novel must, I think, be reckoned a *tour de force*. I have to admit that I never really felt engaged, reading it; Pyat's deficiencies of personality, the enormous cast of characters bouncing in and out of the pages, the welter of places and bewildering shifts of fortune all contribute to confuse rather than compel. And at the end we leave Pyat on a British ship heading for Constantinople, saving his skin yet again, still in early youth. It is inconclusive, like history; the reader is left with a feeling of anticlimax which is acceptable in an account of facts but not so in a work of fiction. But, that being said, one cannot but admire the pace of the book, the virtuosity, the descriptions of people and of places—Odessa, snow-bound train journeys, brothels, prisons. For many it will be a robust, absorbing read, even if it is difficult to emerge with a clear picture of what has been happening to whom, and why.

GORE VIDAL'S MASSIVE new novel[3] ranges from Periclean Athens to the courts of Darius and of Xerxes, to India and to Cathay. Once again, first person narration; once again, a turbulent and colourful slice of history. Vidal's hero, though, is more sympathetic than the odious and, it must be said, frequently tedious Pyat. Cyrus Spitama, grandson of Zoroaster, half Greek and half Persian, dictating his memoirs in old age, is capable

[3] *Creation*. By GORE VIDAL. Heinemann, £8.95.

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of detachment, cynicism and reflection. And if his recollections err on the side of overkill (or so the reader sometimes feels, staggering alongside him through endless conversations and court intrigues and searing desert journeys) at least the narrative voice is cool, civilised and persuasive.

Cyrus is an intellectual. His physical journeyings—undertaken in furtherance of Darius' wealth lust ("I dream of cows . . .")—become the medium for his own search for theological explanations of the problem of evil, of the origins of mind, of creation itself. "I shall explain why evil is—and is not", he says, and in pursuit of such truths he engages Indian mystics in long dialogues, tangles with Confucius, examines the beliefs of his own grandfather whose priestly acolyte he continues to be, long after (as a child) he witnesses Zoroaster's murder. He meets everyone who is anyone: Pericles, Herodotus, Themistocles, Thucydides, the Buddha—not to mention the scheming ladies and eunuchs of the court of Darius, at which he grows up, and Xerxes himself, who becomes his friend and brother. He is trusted by Darius, sent as ambassador to India and Cathay, created "King's eye"—the ultimate court accolade—and given one of his daughters as a wife: an alliance unfortunately devoid of passion on either side but convenient nevertheless. His Indian journeyings had in any case provided him with another aristocratic wife and two sons. Personal relationships are not central to Cyrus' life; just as well, in view of the disconcerting tendency of his associates to meet with unexplained ends, usually at the whim of Darius' Queen, Atossa, or even Cyrus' mother, a Thracian witch called Lais. . . . There is no end to the thicket of intrigue through which Cyrus picks his careful and wryly observant way.

And at the end of it all, living out a blind but not disagreeable old age as Persian ambassador to Athens, he has to admit himself none the wiser; that ultimate explanation has eluded him. Is there a creator? And if there is, why has he created the world thus? And if there is not, and he has not, then how have we arisen? He dislikes what he sees as the atheism of the Confucians, and resists the eastern sidestepping of the problem of creation—"They are wrong. . . . Everything that we perceive starts somewhere and stops somewhere. Like a line drawn in the sand. Like a . . . piece of string." The last word on the matter is given to Democritus, the scribe of his memoirs:

> "The first principles of the universe are atoms and empty space; everything else is merely human thought. Worlds such as this one are unlimited in number. They come into being, and perish. But nothing can come into being from that which is not, or pass away into that which is not. . . . The cause of the coming into being of all things is the ceaseless whirl, which I call

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necessity; and everything happens according to necessity. Thus, creation is constantly created and recreated."

The novel sparkles with detail: descriptions of people—young Xerxes, whose "pale eyes resembled moonstones and the new beard was like Scythian fox fur"—of Indian palaces and Persian cities and the intricate practices of the several courts at which Cyrus finds himself. Nothing has been left out: peacocks, elephants, chariots, violence and a reasonable ration of sex. And if at times the reader has a queasy feeling of being among the pages, so to speak, of a Cecil B. de Mille film, the reason, I fear, is that almost inescapable hazard of the historical novel: the obtrusion of background fact. It is as though the author of a contemporary novel felt obliged to tell you what brand of lavatory paper people are using, or how they set about drawing social security benefits (and of course some do). Not that Vidal is ever didactic; information is more subtly conveyed, but nevertheless there is a sense, working through the five hundred and ten pages, that not a morsel of what the blurb-writer calls "his formidable erudition" has been allowed to go to waste. Those who like spacious, meaty, wide-screen historical novels will enjoy *Creation*. Those of us who prefer a sparer and more idiosyncratic use of the form will turn back to J. G. Farrell.

Queen Edith

On Edith Sitwell—By BLAKE MORRISON

OF ALL THE DOCUMENTS one would least want to fall into the hands of some alien anthropologist eager to learn something about 20th-century culture, the photograph taken at the Gotham Book Mart party, New York, in 1948, must be a prime candidate. It is not that the writers arranged about the bookshelves there have passed from our memory or deserve to; on the contrary, it would be hard to find a photograph displaying a comparable number of mid-century literary celebrities—Tennessee Williams, Richard Eberhart, W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Elizabeth Bishop, Marianne Moore, Randall Jarrell and Delmore Schwartz are among those shown. What is disturbing (and distorting) is that these writers should be assembled like so many courtiers or footmen round the bethroned, centre-stage figures of Osbert and Edith Sitwell. The impression—and it is reinforced by the fact that she is wearing a crown and that he has his hands folded in the posture of a benign but all-powerful ruler—is of the Sitwells holding court. And our alien anthropologist, schooled in the rites and ceremonies of royalty, would have to conclude that here sit two of the monarchs of modern culture.

Edith must have been especially well-pleased with the photograph, for she, much more than her brothers Osbert and Sacheverell, made a conscious effort to play the part of a royal. Her costume and jewellery—the spiky crown she wore when acting in the role of Lady Macbeth, her "bird-king's hat", her gold Aztec collar, not to mention all the stoles and robes and bangles and brooches she carted round with her, even on trips abroad—were designed to give her a dramatic and imposing presence. Ivy Compton-Burnett, thinking of her overbearing manner as well as her appearance, described her as "a mixture of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Queen Elizabeth." She could be imperious about her family background: "I was a member of a family/whose legend was of hunting", we are told at the beginning of her most famous poem, "Colonel Fantock", and later comes a reference to "the Angevin dead kings from whom we spring." But she reserved most of her haughtiness for the honours she acquired herself, notably the D. Litts she received from the universities of Leeds and Durham and Oxford (thereafter Edith insisted that she be addressed in all correspondence as "Dr Edith Sitwell, D.Litt, D.Litt, D.Litt") and her 1954 appearance in the Queen's Birthday Honours List: "I *am* glad to have been made a Dame", she wrote, "because it has slapped down all the miserable little pipsqueaks in the *New Statesman and Nation* and *Spectator* who have been persecuting me for months."

Slapping down was one of Edith's favourite activities: she regarded criticism of her work as a form of treason, and those who had dared to perpetrate such an offence were quickly acquainted with her disfavour. Pearl Binder's mild caricature of Edith was received as "an outrageous insult. . . . The fact that I am a distinguished poet only makes things worse." Hamilton Fyfe, making a passing reference to the Sitwells as "literary curiosities of the 1920s" in what was otherwise a genial review, got himself hauled off to court, where the Sitwells were awarded £350 each plus costs. Occasionally Edith would draw up a blacklist of offenders—"Person who insulted Sachie under heading of Sir

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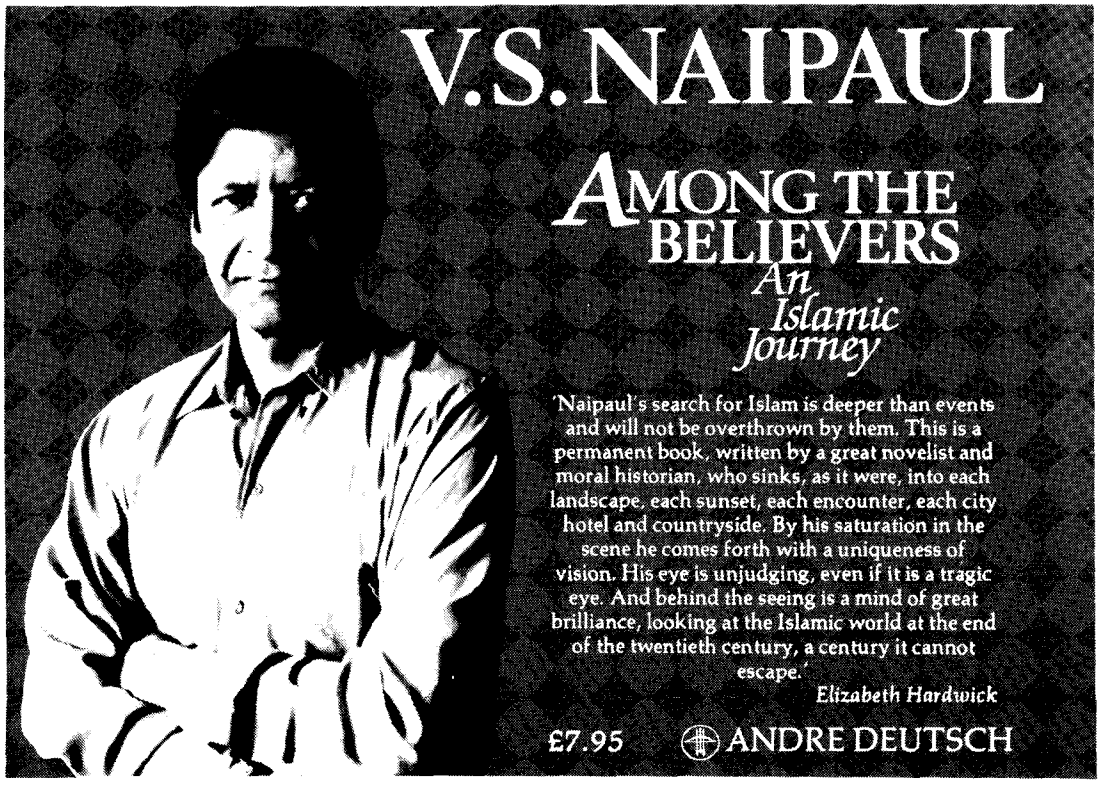
Patchwork Quilt. Person who insulted me by letter. Person whom Kingsley Martin allowed to re-insult me in the *New Statesman*."—so that these rabble-rousers might be dealt with appropriately. Cecil Day Lewis called these campaigns the "Sitwell Charges of the Light Brigade", and any editor imprudent enough to permit reference to the Sitwells in his pages was all-too-familiar with them.

EDITH DIDN'T JUST QUEEN it in life, she also believed one should come the aristocrat in poetry. In her 1925 essay "Poetry and Criticism" she declared that it was "time we returned to an earlier [pre-Wordsworth] tradition in poetry, and left the peasant and words suitable to the peasant." Later she wrote that "poetry should never be middle class" (whatever that might mean) and used the word "suburban" as the most damning of epithets. Being uppish and getting uppity came easily to her not only because of her upper-class origins but because she had stature in another sense: she measured six feet, tall for a woman even these days and exceptionally so in her own day. Though it made her awkward and self-conscious in childhood, she took the height business seriously and proposed a connection between the physique of poets and their achievement and technique. The diminutive peak early, she claimed, and can only manage couplets; the lanky Stephen Spender and, it is implied, Edith herself have great things to look forward to in the second half of life:

> "Thirty-five is a grand age. One is just beginning to be at the height of one's powers. That is, if one has your kind of physique. Small people's full powers die far earlier, as they come to their height, in some cases, earlier."

This notion of Spender as a late developer might ring a little hollow now, but then most of Edith's predictions and valuations were of the same exact-opposite-of-the-truth quality. Countless young men became her protégés, the prerequisite seeming to be that, as Brian Howard did for example, they should first have praised her in print. But her patronage seems invariably to have been the kiss of death: a typical case was that of Quentin Stevenson, described by her as "the most remarkable young poet who has arisen since Dylan Thomas." The genuinely talented, on the other hand, usually prompted her to attack. "What a bore Master Auden is", she decided, "his poetry nearly always lacks interest"; Dylan Thomas "ought to be dashed off to a psychoanalyst immediately before worse befalls"; Eliot's *Four Quartets* were "completely bloodless and spiritless"; D. H. Lawrence was head of the "Jaeger school of literature"—"hot, soft and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woolly." It is true that many of Edith's more absurd estimations were passed in the heat of the moment, out of rancour or loyalty (she never forgave Eliot for walking out on John Hayward, or Lawrence for using Osbert as a model for Clifford Chatterley). Still, for someone often said to have suffered from the mean-mindedness of others (F. R. Leavis and Geoffrey Grigson in particular), Edith could be remarkably begrudging and mean-spirited herself.

THIS WAS ALL THE MORE SO in the case of other women writers, whom she always saw—no matter whether they were dead or alive—as potential rivals. Contemporaries like Charlotte Mew, Vita Sackville-West, Nancy Cunard, Kathleen Raine and Anne Ridler were treated to her scorn, and even George Eliot was adjudged by her to be unreadable. A feminist case for Sitwell would be difficult to mount, given her attitudes to her own sex: "Women are Hell" was one of her sayings, and she was dismissive about women who aspired to culture and education: "As for the kind of women you mention", she wrote to Robert Nichols, "they should have been allowed to remain an organism with as much life as a sea-anemone. The trouble is that these creatures realise that it is fashionable to be smeared with brain and in consequence they lose their one usefulness." On the question of women's poetry, she made exceptions for Dorothy Wordsworth and Christina Rossetti (partly because, like her, they devoted themselves to their brothers), but her considered judgment was hostile:

> "Women's poetry, with the exception of Sappho (I have no Greek and speak with great humility on that subject) and with the exception of 'Goblin Market' and a few deep and concentrated, but fearfully incompetent poems of Emily Dickinson, is *simply awful*—incompetent, floppy, whining, arch, trivial, self-pitying. . . ."

Statements such as these make it unlikely that any revival of Edith Sitwell should come from feminist quarters. And yet a revival of some sort *does not seem beyond the bounds of possibility*. Victoria Glendinning, in her excellent new biography,[1] begins with an account of two men disagreeing about Edith's poetry at a party, the older—a typical "Movement" figure—being dismissive, the younger declaring how "wonderful" a poem *Gold Coast Customs* is. The case against Sitwell has been made repeatedly over the years, most memorably by Julian Symons who called her "the arch-nurse of empty phrases." But the implication of Mrs Glendinning's anecdote is that a new generation may now have arrived, one less disposed to steely trimming, less aware of the old literary wranglings, and therefore better disposed to allow Edith Sitwell a second hearing. Certain shifts in recent British poetry away from scrupulosity and plain speech towards dandyism and metaphor, though Mrs Glendinning does not mention them, might also suggest the emergence of a literary climate less antagonistic to Sitwell. Coming as it does hard on the heels of John Pearson's *Façades*, this new biography is itself symptomatic of a new openness to the Sitwell question.

It must be said at once that the book displays a sympathetic but intelligent understanding of a kind that Edith has never been treated to before. Victoria Glendinning has "got inside" Edith to the extent (as the Sunday papers have shown) of beginning to look like her, and in the preface she admits that she has "ended up with a great respect for her, and a very protective feeling." The protectiveness begins at the beginning, with Edith's childhood: an unwanted child, she was a fat, ugly, lonely girl who got on badly with her mother and was forced, because of her weak spine, to wear various strange "corrective" devices, including a steel contraption for her long legs and a metal rack for her odd-shaped (like an anteater's, someone said) nose. Mrs Glendinning convincingly establishes that a number of Edith's less endearing characteristics can be traced back to her unhappy childhood; and, though she doesn't suggest this, the unhappiness may also be the reason why so many compensatory images of an idealised childhood (the reynards, the nursery-maids, and all the general tweeness) figure largely in the poetry. Mrs Glendinning also shows that although Edith came from a wealthy family she was herself far from well-off for most of her adult life: to say that "she never had any money", as the author rather wildly does at one point, is to put it too strongly (there's the small question, for example, of the 271-guinea ermine jacket she bought for her appearance on John Freeman's *Face to Face* television programme), but certainly she was treated meanly by her father, suffered frequent financial difficulties as a result, and spent most of her life in poor accommodation.

There are times when Victoria Glendinning's protectiveness towards her subject becomes something else:

> "A woman has two images. There is the magical person seen or remembered by those who love her, her finest qualities of flesh and spirit illuminated. She herself knows this ideal self; she projects it, if she is confident; or she daydreams her ideal self; or she recognises it with gratitude in the admiring eyes of others. There is at the same time a second image: the woman as seen by those who dislike or fear her. This cruel

[1] *Edith Sitwell: A Unicorn Among Lions*. By VICTORIA GLENDINNING. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £10.00.

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picture has an all-too-powerful mirror in her own negative idea of herself. She sees with fear her own damaging impulses and, most painful of all, a graceless, freakish, unlovable physical self."

Here empathy has become indulgence, and the passage as a result comes uncomfortably close to being romantic kitsch with its eye on public library sales. Similarly embarrassing moments come when Mrs Glendinning overrates, as she tends to, Edith's humour and wit: she describes her as "carving up" literary enemies when all that exists is the odd feeble jab blatantly inspired by jealousy (it hardly seems right, for example, to describe Edith's verdict on Auden's "Lay Your Sleeping Head"—"full of outworn cliché"—as a "knockout blow"). Again, a soppiness Edith herself was prone to creeps in from time to time, as when she heads a chapter "Left Turn" and remarks that Edith was "oppressed by the hypocrisy and unfairness of the world", an observation calculated to make the pragmatist in one cry out in frustration: "Whose? Where? Why? With what results?"

BUT VICTORIA GLENDINNING can also be sharp and hard-headed, unwilling to take any more of Edith's nonsense, and there are many pleasingly deflationary moments in the book when her wry humour quietly points up the more gross of her subject's affectations. She shows great common sense, too, in her treatment of Edith's long relationship with Pavel Tchelitchew ("Pavlik"), the man she came closest to loving, and of the general question of Edith's sexuality. There seems little doubt that Edith died a virgin: the only man to show interest in her was, allegedly (at least Edith alleged it), Wyndham Lewis, and even Pavlik, who had more time for her than anyone, would not consent to be left on his own with her ("What—alone with Sitvouka? Non, mon cher! What do you want? *I should be raped*!"). Edith's naivety in matters of sex was such that on seeing Pavlik's erotic painting of two people making love she is said to have asked "But what are they doing?" ("He's giving her artificial respiration", Pavlik replied.) Nor was lesbianism a possible alternative: Edith disapproved of homosexuality ("piggy things", she called it, despite Osbert) and preferred the company of men to that of women. All this requires honest but ungratuitous attention, and Victoria Glendinning gives it that, as the following passage may suggest:

"[Edith] did not attract men sexually. Her strange face and long white hands and gestures were beautiful, but her body carried no sexual messages. It looked, Rosamond Lehmann said, like a Henry Moore column. It was hard to imagine her naked. If she had no confidence in

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her attractiveness, if she felt even that she was freakish and deformed, nothing that happened to her ever persuaded her that she was deceived."

BUT WHATEVER its success as a Life, this book also has some business as literary criticism: Mrs Glendinning wishes to persuade us not only that Edith has been misunderstood as a person but that she has been underrated as a poet. Here, I'm afraid, she has less going for her.

It's not that she doesn't take a very firm stand. She begins, boldly, with the claim that some of Sitwell's poetry "stands up with the best and greatest" and that on the basis of her "twelve finest poems, she would have an unquestioned uncategorised place on anyone's Parnassus." Later she calls her "a 'first-rate' poet, in Hazlitt's definition." To the famous remark of Leavis about the Sitwells belonging to the world not of poetry but of publicity she replies that Edith belongs to both; and to Julian Symons's criticism of her "inability to see and hear what is around her" she retorts that the creation of an inner world of colour and fantasy is precisely Edith's strength. She also capitalises on the fact that though the 1930s and 1950s Oxford generations savaged Sitwell at first, both in a sense came round to her: Spender, Lehmann and Connolly became friends of hers, Helen Gardner put her in her Oxford anthology, and finally even Philip Larkin included her in his *Oxford Book of 20th Century English Verse.* Though she concedes that some of the poems, especially the later ones, are weak, Mrs Glendinning is on the whole militant in their defence.

And yet there's no doubt that the flimsiest sections of this book are those on the poetry itself. In part this is a problem of Victoria Glendinning's deficiencies as a critic: unable to show how the poems work, she reaches for the cloudy eulogy. And she doesn't seem very confident in speaking about modern poetry at all, a point borne out by her comment that the fourth *Wheels* "was dedicated to the memory of Wilfrid Owen (unfortunately spelt 'Wilfid' on the title page)"—unfortunately Mrs Glendinning hasn't spelt Wilfred Owen's christian name right either. But even if Mrs Glendinning's critical abilities were as strong as her narrative ones, it's doubtful whether the book would have been very much different. For surely what's to be said on Sitwell's behalf as a poet—that in the odd line of "Colonel Fantock" she did manage to express something of herself, that "Still Falls the Rain" has a certain rhetorical power even if its ideas don't bear looking into, that children may perhaps enjoy some of her rhyming or assonance or mention of geese and goblins and foxes—can be managed in very few words indeed. Against that are the very considerable number of

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questions to be asked about her basic ability as a poet.

How, for instance, could she allow herself to be so appallingly repetitive even at a time when Yeats and Dylan Thomas had made acceptable the use of recurrent symbols? The word "creaks" occurs six times in the first forty-six lines of her *Selected Poems*, in images which are inappropriate or meaningless or which lose whatever force they might have had through dilution: "the cold wind creaking in my blood", "the slant crystal buds that creak", "the morning light creaks down again", "the creaking empty light" and so on—it is as if, like the most bungling of novices, she had got some eccentric word in her head and wouldn't let go. And what about all those quaint inversions ("that once in dark blue grass dew-dabbled/Lay", "the turning of Ixion's wheel the day/Ceased not", "her heart, that honeycomb,/Thick darkness like a bear devours"—who's devouring what in that last image?) or those awful rhyme-and-rhythm preservers with the comma'd short cuts—*'gin*, *'neath*, *'mid*, *o'er*, and even *th'*. Can there be a more laboured rhyme anywhere than "When green as a river was the barley/. . . I waded deep and began to parley"? Or a more out-of-touch reference than the "cannon" appearing in one of her poems about the Second World War? Or a more misjudged and ludicrous use of names than "Mompesson" and "Mr Wagg" and "Heliogabalus" and even the "Dagobert and Peregrine" of "Colonel Fantock"?

ABOVE ALL, perhaps, there is the question of Sitwell's borrowings. As a critic she was well known to be a plagiarist, but rereading her poetry one is struck by how little of that, too, is truly hers: remove Christina Rossetti, Walter de la Mare, Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot and Dylan Thomas and all that remains is airy Romantic nothings repeated at length—"I who was once a golden woman", "I, a golden woman like the corn goddess", "I, an old woman in the light of the sun", "I too was a golden woman like those that walk/In the fields of the heavens:—but am now grown old", "I with the golden feet/That had walked in the fields of Death." Fifty years on, the indebtedness of Sitwell's allegedly most original poem, *Gold Coast Customs*, to *The Waste Land* and *The Hollow Men* looks almost comical: crudely contrasting the "civilised" world with the "uncivilised" (Lady Bamburgher's party as against darkest Africa—you can almost sense Edith exulting over this thrilling conception), the poem then proceeds to recycle Eliot's imagery in the most nakedly larcenous manner: "Bahunda, Banbangla, Barumbe, Bonge/And London fall", "The sick thick smoke from London burning", "creeping over/The Sailor's Street/Where the houses like rat-skin/Masks flap, meet/Never across the murdered bone/Of the sailor", "What is that mad whimpering like a child/That this mad ghost beats like a drum in the air", "Grass creaks like a carrion-bird's voice, rattles,/Squeaks like a wooden shuttle", "White as a bone/Where eyelids rot wide"—and so on, *ad infinitum*: it is like someone running a high fever being asked to recall their favourite passages from Eliot's *Collected Poems*.

In the preface to her biography, Victoria Glendinning remarks that attitudes to Edith Sitwell have always been bound up with social and political affiliations (there aren't many lower-middle-class provincial socialists among her admirers); and at several points later she suggests that hostility to Edith also emanates from the narrower politicking of "the poetry scene." Both observations are just, and anyone feeling the gorge rising in his throat as he reads Sitwell's poetry will have to examine his feelings carefully. But nor will it quite do to throw up one's hands and agree that everything is anyway subjective and a matter of personal taste and to be explained by "the poetry scene." Quite simply, no one has yet provided an argument to show that Edith Sitwell deserves a place in the history of 20th-century poetry, and until someone does the suspicion will linger that she belongs not to "the society of the poem" (Jonathan Raban's phrase) but to "the cocktail party of the poem"—to the world that she solicited in the dedications to her poems ("For Harold Acton", "For Benjamin Britten", "To L. P. Hartley", "For John Gielgud" and so on—if only Edith had put the same care into the poems themselves). In the meantime there's Victoria Glendinning's book to read, a rich and fascinating study of a life that was interesting as a life but not one that (so far as we can tell) belonged to a poet of any consequence.

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LETTERS

Unreal Soviet Realities

THE CENTRAL CONTENTION of Leopold Labedz' article [ENCOUNTER, December] is that Western leaders and his readers generally should recognise what he calls the "expansionist" nature of the Soviet state. Such recognition would, he claims, supplement our military measures with the "political awareness" which alone can provide "coherence for our overall strategy" and provide a demonstration of American "total involvement in a nuclear *Schicksalgemeinschaft* (community of destiny) with Europe."

To Mr Labedz the expansionist nature of the Soviet state is so obvious that he never explicitly discusses the difficulty that there may be other hypotheses about the nature of the Soviet state which are consistent with its historical behaviour and which may appear reasonable to many people. For example, one could suppose that the Soviet Union suffers from a paranoid fear of the West as a result of having been the victim of military aggression on more than one occasion, of its overall economic, scientific, and technological inferiority, and of its feeling of encirclement by the Western powers and China. The attack on Afghanistan, Soviet actions in Africa, and rising Soviet expenditure on defence can be, and have been, interpreted as being consistent with this hypothesis. Probably Mr Labedz regards such a view of the Soviet Union as so misguided as not to require refutation. But a more likely reason why he does not attempt any such refutation is that it is impossible. This hypothesis, like Mr Labedz' "expansionist" hypothesis, is consistent with any conceivable Soviet actions. Consequently debate as to whether one is "true" and the other "false" is meaningless. There is, in fact, no such thing as a kind of inherent essence or "true nature" of the Soviet state which it is important for us to know in order to interpret its behaviour.

MR LABEDZ COMES TO HIS VIEW of the Soviet state, not by historical analysis, but by a process of revelation, and what he demands of his readers is something akin to religious conversion. This, I think, accounts for the apocalyptic flavour of much of his article as, for example, when he writes that our survival is at stake and that the future of civilisation itself may depend on the incoming Reagan administration, which is certainly a disturbing thought. The impossibility of disproving the assumptions of his opponents forces him to reach for the most extreme adjectives he can find to describe them. For example, the view that the Kremlin might negotiate more rationally from a position of rough equality than from a position of marked inferiority is dismissed as "grotesquely absurd"; the idea that the motivations of Mr Brezhnev might be similar to those of Western politicians is "pseudo-academic drivel"; and Dr Kissinger's foreign policy was based on "a monumental piece of fatuous misjudgment."

But one cannot bring about religious conversion by writing impassioned articles and pouring derision on one's opponents and, as he surveys the European scene with its rampant neutralism, Mr Labedz himself seems to doubt that he can make much progress. Oddly enough, he believes that a major problem is that people are too fearful of the Soviet Union, although one might suppose that if the Soviet Union were to do something really frightening, such as to occupy Finland, the "expansionist view" would gain considerable support. But the reason why Mr Labedz' views are not universally accepted is not just that, to many people, the Soviet Union does not appear very expansionist; it is that most people in the West, particularly its political leaders, are not prepared to base their actions on assumptions derived only from ideological preconceptions. They are pragmatists who deal with Soviet actions as they occur, without reference to convictions about some kind of "true nature" of the Soviet state which allegedly gives rise to them. This was clearly illustrated at the Senate hearings on the confirmation of General Alexander Haig as Secretary of State. General Haig was asked by Senator Percy what he thought the ultimate intentions of the Soviet Union were. His reply was that he thought the answer to that question was irrelevant.

J. H. COLLIER

Bethesda
Maryland

Real Soviet Realities

MY ARTICLE was not on the nature of the Soviet state but on Western policies towards it. My view of it has not been formed "by a process of revelation" but relies on historical evidence. One cannot begin every article with an elementary disquisition for the benefit of those born yesterday who naïvely feel that the acceptance of a statement that the Soviet Union is expansionist requires "something akin to religious conversion."

Empirical indications are sufficient for those who are ready to glance at historical facts. The international behaviour of the Soviet Union has been marked from the beginning by a steady expansion. It added to the legacy of Czarist imperialism (which during its existence was incorporating, on average, territory the size of Holland every decade) the universalistic claims of Marxist-Leninism. Having proclaimed the rights of "national self-determination" in 1917, the Bolsheviks soon reincorporated forcibly Ukraine, Georgia, and Central Asia. During World War II they expanded into Eastern Poland, and Finland; incorporated Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bessarabia, Bukovina and Tannu Tuva; and after the War, parts of East Prussia, the other half of Sakhalin, four southern Kurile islands (Habomai, Etorofu, Shikotan and Kunashiri), not to mention the *de facto* incorporation of Outer Mongolia. It was followed by the establishment of control over the whole of Eastern and parts of Central Europe. Since then the Soviet Union has extended its influence in the Caribbean (Cuba, Nicaragua), in Africa (Angola, Ethiopia), and in Asia, (South Yemen, Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia), its expansionism so far culminating in the invasion of Afghanistan. In short, while other empires were fading, the Soviet Union became one.

THE TIRED CLICHÉS about Soviet "paranoia" and fear of invasion were often used in 1945 to justify the post-War

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Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. But, contrary to expectations, this has not at all assuaged the Soviet quest for "security." The same argument is used by Mr Collier 36 years later when the Soviet Union is a global superpower trying to achieve military superiority over the United States and trying to expand its influence everywhere it can. Of course, every new acquisition creates for it a new "security" problem. Poor Mr Brezhnev!—he feels "encircled" and is fearful of Western invasion. Not long ago, in 1968, he had to face a "West German military threat" to Czechoslovakia. More recently in 1979 it was an "American-Chinese military threat" to Afghanistan. Now he is worried by the "NATO threat" to Poland. Yet, realistically, what the Soviets actually fear is not just what the West *does* but what it *is*: a point of ideological comparison; a source of internal insecurity for Soviet rulers; a threat to their legitimacy—all dangers which will not disappear until free and relatively better-off societies will themselves disappear from the face of the earth.

Assuming that the Soviet leaders are indeed "paranoiacs"—another superficial stereotype—does this make them *less* dangerous to the West? If this old fantasy now repeated by Mr Collier is to be taken seriously, how does it make the Soviet Union *less* expansionist and *more* appeasable? One would have thought that we had had enough lessons to know that appeasement does not stop an expanding imperial power. It should be no less obvious that comforting "paranoiacs" does not exactly contribute to curing them of their paranoidal tendencies. Fortunately, however, Soviet leaders are not the paranoiacs some Western commentators make them out to be.

Mr Collier asserts that one hypothesis about Soviet behaviour is as good as another; so he chooses the one he likes (he thinks that they cannot be tested anyway). And he adds that there is no such thing as the "nature" of the Soviet state, as if it were a question of Aristotelian essences and not of the historically characteristic pattern of Soviet political practice. Clearly he knows little about the Soviet Union and even less about scientific hypothetico-deductive method. His arguments are a farrago of non-sense and display a lack of elementary logic.

An hypothesis is a supposition which is to be tested during investigation. If it cannot be refuted in principle, it is not an hypothesis. Different hypotheses have different methodological implications, and if there is no such thing as the nature of the Soviet state there is no point in referring to hypotheses about it as in this case there is nothing to investigate and to test.

MR COLLIER'S REFERENCE to General Alexander Haig as a crown witness against my stand is just ridiculous. In his Senate testimony and in his very first speech, the new Secretary of State expressed an alarm similar to my own and gave a warning against Soviet expansionism, military adventurism, and Moscow's support of international terrorism. To take his pronouncement as an argument *against* my position is a pathetic illustration of Mr Collier's confusion. If he disapproves of my ENCOUNTER article (as he does), he should logically extend his disapproval to General Haig's attitude which in fact parallels my own.

Here is what Haig said in his Washington statement of 30 July:

> "In an era when editorial writers speak of the 'impotence of power', the Soviets and their surrogates have successfully employed unsheathed military might in Angola, Kampuchea, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan. Most recently the Soviets have sought to intimidate the Polish Government's domestic actions by massing forces along the border.
>
> "This last example illustrates a reality which we in the United States have not always appreciated. . . ."

My article was directed against just the kind of mentality displayed in Mr Collier's letter, i.e. against the lack of understanding and the parochial ignorance which underly the views of the "many people [to whom] the Soviet Union does not appear very expansionist . . . the pragmatists who deal with the Soviet actions as they occur." It is precisely because such people lack a sense of history and appear to be incapable of learning from historical experience that the West is now facing in the 1980s the most dangerous decade since World War II.

LEOPOLD LABEDZ

Survey Magazine
London

Diplomatic Betrayal

I AM SORRY to write to you again about something that appeared in your August number. But, really, M. Jean-François Revel ("The Lost Arts of Diplomacy") should not spoil a good case by too sweeping generalisations.

While not dissenting in principle from his assault on the 1970–80 Western policy of *Détente*, I would simply assert that our diplomacy between the end of the War and the point at which this tendentious term became common political currency was successful, broadly speaking, in restraining, by diplomatic means, the ambitions of the Soviet Union. The Treaty of Brussels (1948) and the Atlantic Pact (1949) were classic examples of how the democracies should best defend themselves. Korea (1950–1953) and the Cuban crisis (1963) also demonstrated how the West could successfully make use of its collective strength. The rot set in at the end of the 1960s with Viet Nam.

To infer that Western diplomacy was ineffective and nerveless before this point is consequently misleading, but not so misleading as the absurd "Conclusion" of a (to me unknown) diplomat called Mr Muhlstein that the Yalta Conference was "the first total capitulation of the West to the Soviet Union." In February 1945, the Nazis were still vigorously resisting and the Russian Army was advancing into Poland. Short of declaring war on our ally there was no conceivable way of contesting the (ethnically justified) Soviet claim to the Curzon Line as Russia's Western frontier; nor was the agreed formula on the new Polish Government bad in itself. The trouble was that as they advanced the Russians repudiated not only this agreement but also the famous "Declaration on Liberated Europe" in accordance with which they had agreed (among other things) to hold free elections in all the "Liberated" countries.

What we could have done—and did not do—was to use Soviet repudiation of their engagements to denounce

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the previously signed agreement on the German "Zones" by simply staying where we were when hostilities ended. If we had done that there would have been no German Democratic Republic—and no Communist members of the United Nations either for that matter!

Churchill, who wanted to stay where we were, was overruled by Roosevelt and Eisenhower. But the idea that we simply handed over half Europe on a plate to Russia at Yalta is a myth.

GLADWYN

House of Lords
Westminster

AUTHORS

Douglas Dunn's most recent volume of poems is *St Kilda's Parliament*, published this autumn by Faber & Faber.

Shirley Robin Letwin is the author of *The Pursuit of Certainty*, a study of Hume, Bentham, Mill, and Beatrice Webb (Cambridge University Press, 1965). She has published essays (e.g. "Taking the Law Unseriously", ENCOUNTER, October 1977) and a monograph, *Modern Philosophies of Law* (1972), on philosophy and law. Her article in this issue of ENCOUNTER will form part of her study *The Gentleman in Trollope: Individuality and Moral Conduct* (to be published by Macmillan in Britain and Harvard University Press in the US), where the riddle of the English gentleman is resolved as being an unidentified morality in which there is no conflict between reason and passion, the individual and society, authority and independence.

George Urban is academic consultant to Radio Free Europe, and recorded his conversation with W. Averell Harriman on their behalf. Among numerous publications, he has edited *Détente* (1976), *Hazards of Learning* (1977), *Eurocommunism* (1978), and *Communist Reformation* (1979), all published by Maurice Temple Smith.

Paul Hollander is Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Fellow of the Russian Research Center at Harvard, and author of *Soviet and American Society: A Comparison* (1973). His two articles on "Pilgrims on the Run" are included in his book *Political Pilgrims*, published this October by Oxford University Press, New York, and in November by OUP in London. He is now working on a study of anti-Americanism both inside and outside the United States.

Stewart Brown teaches Caribbean and African literature in the Department of English at Bayero University in Nigeria.

Francis Watson is the author of three books on Gandhi, and was the winner of an Italia Prize for a Gandhi BBC radio documentary. A new edition of his *Concise History of India* was published this year by Thames & Hudson; he is currently working on his autobiography.

Edward Pearce is a leader writer and Parliamentary correspondent on the *Daily Telegraph* in London.

Norman Moss is a writer and journalist, and has written frequently on international affairs. He is the author of *Men Who Play God: The Story of the Hydrogen Bomb* (n.e. 1970); his latest book, *The Politics of Uranium*, will be published early in November by André Deutsch.

James Neilson, who contributed an article on Argentina to the January 1981 issue of ENCOUNTER, is Editor of the leading English-language paper in Argentina, the *Buenos Aires Herald*.

As one of its readers—who does not know Mr Neilson personally—wrote to us ("Letters", June 1981):

> "no Argentinian newspaper was more outspoken than the *Herald* in its coverage and condemnation of Peronist terrorism. The risks it ran in doing so were great indeed. Thus, like many Argentinians, the *Herald* greeted with relief the overthrow in 1976 of the Peronist government and the Armed Forces' decision to exterminate terrorism. Regrettably . . . the Armed Forces placed themselves above the moral law (not to mention the law of the land) and proceeded to kidnap, torture and kill. . . . Among news sources, only the *Herald* stood its ground.
>
> First under the editorship of Robert Cox . . . and now under James Neilson, the *Herald* has remained the only reliable source of information on matters the Armed Forces would prefer not to hear about. . . . If Argentina ever returns to the pattern of civilised behaviour . . . it will be thanks to the efforts of men like Mr Neilson, who are struggling to keep alive in Argentina the claims of common decency."

Penelope Lively won the first National Book Award with her novel *Treasures of Time* (1979). Her most recent novel, *Judgement Day*, was published in 1980 by Heinemann, who this year bring out her new children's book, *The Revenge of Samuel Stokes*.

Blake Morrison is on the editorial staff of the *Times Literary Supplement*. His poems and criticism have appeared in ENCOUNTER, *Critical Quarterly*, *Poetry Nation Review* and the *New Statesman*. His critical study, *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s*, was published last year by Oxford University Press.

Tadeusz Różewicz, two of whose poems appeared in the October issue of ENCOUNTER, publishes in November a substantial collection of his work, entitled *Conversation with the Prince and Other Poems* (Anvil Press).

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Grimethorpe

HAPPY END: Citizens' Band radio users are being asked to change their code name for a Yorkshire pit village.

The term 'Mucky City' for Grimethorpe, near Barnsley, has upset a former mayor.

"The term is offensive. People hear it and think it is a real dump, but Grimethorpe is a pleasant spot to live in. I am writing to the CB people asking them to change the name and have suggested Happy City or Beautiful City."

A spokesman for the CB operators said: "You certainly can't call Grimethorpe beautiful, but we don't want to cause offence. We have had a vote and are quite prepared to go along with Happy City as the new name."

DAILY MAIL

El Centro, Calif.

"ARABS": *Student leaders at Imperial Valley College say it's time to change their sports' teams nickname, "the Arabs."*

"We beg you to get rid of it (the name)," coach Mike Swearingen recently asked the Associated Students' Assembly.

The announcement given the Arabs at away games now evokes jeers and obscene gestures, a coach complained. A football player said fans at University of Nevada-Las Vegas "probably thought we were Iranians."

ATLANTA JOURNAL

London

TENSE TREASON: *We seem just recently to have got into a muddle with our subjunctives, particularly over the distinction between those pretty little modal auxiliaries "may" and "might" [Philip Howard writes].*

The difference between may *and* might *can be more than one of nuance. In general the past tense indicates a greater improbability or even unreality.*

If we say of somebody: "He may *have taken bribes and joined the KGB while up at King's, Cambridge", we are making a serious allegation.*

He might *have taken bribes and joined the KGB", implies that he did not perform either of those fashionable acts, although some of his contemporaries did.*

THE TIMES

Geneva

FRANGLAIS: *The head of the English translators at the World Health Organisation in Geneva says young applicants tend to translate much better from what the French call "les faux amis"—words that appear to mean the same in both tongues.*

Thus, when the French papers claim that "Madame Thatcher ne joue pas le jeu", the obvious temptation is to translate it as "Maggie doesn't play the game"; whereas it actually means "she won't play along"—a very different matter.

I find [Godfrey Smith writes] the new Harrap French-English Business Dictionary useful, but it is deeply disappointing to this Francophile to see the threadbare French versions for our more punchy business idiom. A golden handshake is "une indemnité de départ," which is nowhere near as good. A 50/50 venture is "un accord d'entreprise en coparticipation à 50%." A bouncing cheque is a mealy-mouthed "chèque sans provision."

SUNDAY TIMES

London

PRIDE: Once when one of his Cabinet ministers had been arrested for committing an indecent act with a girl in Hyde Park, he listened to the details and then said to the policeman: "You say that this happened at two o'clock in the morning?"—"Yes, sir."—"You say that the minister is over 70 years old?"—"Yes, sir."—"And you say that the temperature was three degrees below zero?"—"Yes, sir."—"You know," said Churchill, "It almost makes me proud to be British."

DAILY MAIL

New York City

HOME'S A CASTLE: *London needs to promote itself with an aggressive approach similar to that of New York and its "fantastically successful" promotional theme "I love New York," says Mr Michael Montague, the chairman of the English Tourist Board.*

"We need to add a little of New York's vitality to London's dignity. Our dignity tends to be a bit of a veneer and London can afford to be more extrovert."

Britain is expected to attract 13 million overseas tourists this year. History, pageantry, traditions and beauty of the countryside continued to be key factors in attracting Americans to Britain.

One anomaly revealed in recent research was that people listed "Castles and Châteaux" high on their list of attractions in Britain and other European countries. But "Stately Homes" were low on the list.

"Clearly they considered a Castle more important than a Stately Home," he said. "So when I get back to Britain I am going to urge owners of Stately Homes to start advertising their properties as Castles."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Essen

BULL: According to the final decision reached today by the judges in the regional high court, to call the police "*Bullen*" (Bulls) is still, for all its general slang usage in everyday language, an insult and therefore punishable by a fine for slander. For a policeman to be called a "*Bull*" (the equivalent of "pig" in English) is an act of denigration and must be considered demeaning to his personal honour. The court rejected the argument that the German word had over the years become "*wertfrei*", or objective, without loaded meaning.

DIE WELT (*Bonn*)

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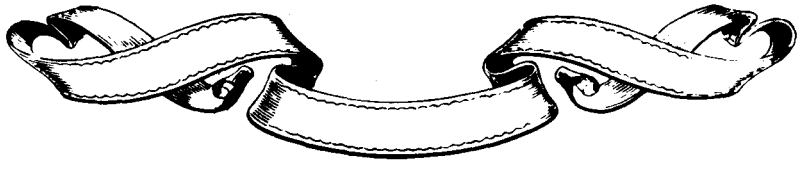

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